

עליה Aliyah:

THE RABBINIC SEARCH AS AN
UPLIFTING RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE!

Rabbi Elliot Salo Schoenberg



Newly Revised and Updated



The Rabbinical Assembly כנסת הרבנים

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PREFACE

“And Moses went up (עלה) to God and the Lord called out to him from the Mountain.” (Exodus 19:3)

You are embarking on a challenging process which will hopefully bring great benefit to your congregational community and provide a source of great satisfaction for your search committee. This guide is intended to make the process as efficient and anxiety-free as possible. Each situation is unique, yet there is something to learn from collective experience in helping congregations find their rabbi. We recommend a careful reading of this guide to ease the experience for the committee, the congregation and the rabbi. This guide reflects the accumulated advice gleaned from the experience of many congregations which have gone through the process of looking for a rabbi. It reflects the wisdom and guidance of both laity and rabbis.

We have called this manual *Aliyah: עליה The Rabbinic Search as an Uplifting Religious Experience*. Why ALIYAH? *Aliyah* is a term known to all of us. עליה לרגל (*aliyah l'regel*) is the thrice-yearly pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem described in the Torah. עליה לתורה (*aliyah laTorah*) is the term we use when a Jew is called up to the Torah. עליה לארץ ישראל (*aliyah l'eretz Yisrael*) is term used when someone settles in the land of Israel. And עליית נשמה (*aliyat neshama* – elevation of the soul) is a Hassidic term that acknowledges that when someone dies, they go up a series of levels until they reach the Garden of Eden to join with the Divine Presence. עליה, which literally means “going up,” is the symbol of the search process for a rabbi. We hope this manual will elevate your confidence in the search process. It is our hope that finding a rabbi will be an uplifting experience, bringing you and your congregation closer to the Divine Presence.

This excursion can be a difficult, long and tedious process. However, if you keep in the back of your thoughts the importance of the physical and spiritual benefit the results will bring your community you will be able to overcome any issues your congregation might face. A successful process will not only get your congregation a rabbi, but help it grow and mature.

PART I: CREATING A SACRED COMMUNITY

וַיֹּאמֶר, אֲכַן יֵשׁ יְהוָה בְּמִקּוֹם הַזֶּה; וְאֲנֹכִי, לֹא יָדַעְתִּי

“Surely, the Lord is present in this place, and I did not know it.” (Genesis 28:16)

Rabbinic tradition has several names for the synagogue. It is called *bet kneset*, which translates “House of Assembly” in English, and “synagogue” in Greek. The synagogue is the public institution *par excellence* of the Jewish people. *Bet midrash* is the second characteristic term, which means “house of study” and is familiar to us from the Yiddish *schule*. It is an appropriate use of a specific term to describe an entire institution. Another commonly used term is *bet t’fillah*, “House of Prayer.” This came into vogue later than the first two terms, but by the Middle Ages it described the chief function of the synagogue. By the early Middle Ages, the most common term was *kehillah kedosha* – a sacred community which does not describe a task or a function, but makes a definitive statement about the purpose of a synagogue. This term captures the significance of the synagogue to Jewish life both in history and today. While the practical functions of the synagogue are important, it is the ultimate aim that must always be foremost in our minds: to cultivate a sacred relationship with God and our people.

The task of a search committee seeking a rabbi for a synagogue, for the *kehillah kedosha* may appear to be secular or mundane. But understanding that we are a sacred community reminds us that the task before us has as its ultimate purpose securing a religious leader to guide the membership and the lay leadership on the path to growing as a sacred community. It says in Genesis 28:16: “Surely, the Lord is present in this place, and I did not know it.” Judaism teaches that we can find holiness in the mundane tasks of the world. The goal of the rabbinic placement process of the Conservative Movement, expressly that of the Joint Placement Commission (JPC), is for you to discover Divine Presence in your search process.

By agreeing to serve on a rabbinic search committee, you are doing God’s work. Searching for a rabbi is not another business task for the synagogue, it can be a path to make God’s presence felt in our lives. If you follow these guidelines, based on the experience of many others, not only will you be successful in finding a rabbi, but you will feel that you have carried out a *mitzvah*. As you begin this religious task it is appropriate to recite the *Sheheheyanu* blessing. Together as a search committee you may recite:

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם שהחינו וקימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה

*Praised are You, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, granting us life,
sustaining us and enabling us to reach this holy occasion.*

How might you make this is a sacred journey? 1) Study a text together. Begin every search committee meeting with a *d’var Torah* by a member of the committee. 2) Do a *mitzvah* together. Do an act of *gemilut hesed* as a committee. For example, your synagogue may be one organization that takes turns providing services at a homeless shelter. Let the search committee volunteer as a unit to represent the community. 3) Wear a kippah at all meetings and when discussing your plans and reviewing resumes. 4) Put ritual items and Jewish books out on the meeting table. For example, put out a small basket of dried fruit for *Tu B’shvat*. 5) Use careful

language and have respectful deliberations. Even in heated conversation, be aware of the prohibition against *lashon harah* (hurtful speech).

A Different Model

Most of you reading this guide are veterans of years of leadership in the synagogue community. Others of you are influential in the Jewish community and recognized experts in the business community. It is worthwhile to start our search journey by discussing a trap that even experienced congregational leaders fall into when conducting a rabbinic search: using a business model for this search. This is an easy but dangerous trap to fall into, especially since the language of business has permeated our synagogue culture in recent years. Many synagogue lay leaders like to say their rabbi is the CEO. Also, in recent years, some synagogues have said they must act more “business-like,” for an example, by developing a mission statement or developing a “financial plan.” Even more stunning, many businesses have adopted values and practices once seen only in the religious community. Many businesses now articulate that they have a sense of purpose higher than the bottom line. For example, multinational chemical corporations might work to honor the environment and pharmaceutical companies might define their mission more broadly to eradicate diseases from the planet. Because most of our congregants are much more familiar with business models of language, these are often employed in the rabbinical search, which becomes a search for a senior executive rather than a religious leader. In the experience of the JPC, this is not an optimal model.

We at the JPC believe that because when looking for a religious leader your search needs to approach the task differently than a business search. We recommend that you use the Polarity Model. What does the Polarity Model look like?

The Polarity Model is a values-based evaluation system. There is much to learn from the broader non-profit sector. Peter Drucker, the management guru, differentiates non-profits from profit-making businesses by saying non-profits are not agents of profit but agents of human change. This is a wonderful description of the synagogue’s mission. Your rabbinic search committee needs to know what your candidate’s vision of *tikkun olam* is. Non-profits like the American Cancer Society and the Red Cross are experts on how an organization works with volunteers. There is a special set of skills connected to how to secure loyalty from people when the only tool at hand is persuasion. So your search committee will need to get a sense of the interpersonal skills of the candidate and how their style will be accepted by the new community. Another lesson from the non-profits, especially from the literature for heads of school is about the importance of community building. A synagogue is a community and its rabbi functions as a community builder. Like a school principal, a religious leader builds community by creating meaning, articulating values and directing the purpose. Your search committee will want to explore the community building skills of your rabbi.

We believe you will be successful in your search only when you move away from the business model and adopt the Polarity Model. Most businesses are guided by the market principles of economic reality. For example, a cost-benefit analysis is an appropriate and expected business tool. The Polarity Model uses a value based approach. However, Drucker says the first question a business should ask is: What business are we in? The answer is: Our real business is what we spend most of our time doing. General Motors is in the car business.

Synagogues are in the business of hosting and creating sacred moments. Your search committee is not looking for a business manager, or an expert in volunteer relations. What matters the most in the synagogue world is the opportunity to serve others, create a sacred, caring community, fight passionately for a cause and find meaningful ways to connect to God. Synagogues, of course, use financial considerations in their planning but they emphasize tradition, rituals, symbols and customs when making decisions. Your rabbi might spend hours at the bedside of a congregant facing death, devote precious resources to the most needy of her congregants by securing scholarships for their children, or helping others develop a job-search network. Your rabbi takes their post-b'nai *mitzvah* students to staff a soup kitchen not only because America is facing an increasing unemployment rate, but because Judaism commands us to feed the hungry. Such activities cannot be justified by any kind of financial yardstick. These activities reflect actions based on a religious value system. Values, dreams and ideas are hallmarks of the religious world. You are looking for a leader whose religious leadership style resonates with your congregation's religious values. Rabbis need to be mindful of synagogue management constraints, to be sure, but they are religious leaders first. You are looking for a person who will help you grow religiously both as individuals and as a congregation.

Finally, and most importantly, the rabbi is a religious symbol. A rabbi's key role is what Rabbi Jack Bloom calls being a "symbolic exemplar." Rabbis, whether off or on the *bimah*, represent the Divine. Clergy evoke the Presence whenever and wherever they are present. Many congregants see in the rabbi their pathway to God and their avenue and opportunity for chastisement and redemption. As a result, the search committee evaluates the religious authenticity of the candidate by asking how the candidate sees her rabbinic role as a calling.

The JPC sees your process of electing a rabbi having four distinct periods for your congregation: 1) self-reflection; 2) the search process; 3) transition; and 4) first year. A congregation will always experience all four stages, but not always in sequence. However, it is critical to pass through each stage completely and thoroughly, understanding the needs and demands of each period, and in each step of the process, the presence of God will be felt.

Meet the Principals

Over the years, members of the search committee may have availed themselves of the many resources and experienced personnel in the national offices of our movement. Recognizing the tension and anxiety this period generates, congregations may be comforted by renewing ties with the national and regional offices of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (USCJ), the Jewish Theological Seminary and the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies at the University of Judaism. However, it is the JPC that specifically looks after the placement process and takes care to be in touch with you about the search for your new rabbi.

Joint Placement Commission (JPC)

The JPC is the only advisory group and decision-making body with regard to rabbinic placement in the Conservative Movement. It is a partnership of the Jewish Theological Seminary, the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (USCJ) and the Rabbinical Assembly (RA). The Director of the JPC is Rabbi Elliot Schoenberg. The JPC advises Rabbi Schoenberg on matters of procedure and planning in placement. Any needs,

questions or comments from your congregation or your search committee you can always direct to the JPC for a thoughtful response. To request an action from the JPC it must be made in writing. The JPC meets at regular intervals throughout the year. While changes in the structure of placement may be made only by the RA, the JPC oversees the ongoing work of placement. The best way to reach the JPC is through the director's email: eschoenberg@rabbinicalassembly.org.

What does the JPC do? Its major obligations are to monitor the rabbinic search and election processes and to administer the Placement Code. The JPC brings order and dignity to the process by 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 rules and regulations, carefully conceived, are continuously evaluated. Their goal is to provide the best opportunity for congregations and rabbis to meet and affect a lasting relationship. They are published so that all who participate in the process can be well informed about procedures and ethical policies. A few rules should be highlighted:

- o A congregation may search for a rabbi only through the offices of the JPC.
- o Eligible candidates are those whose resumes are forwarded by the JPC.
- o A congregation served by the JPC shall not advertise in the media for a rabbi. If a congregation advertises, it may be removed from the Placement List.
- o If a congregation interviews a non-RA rabbi without the specific written approval of the JPC, the congregation may be removed from the Placement List.
- o If a congregation engages a non-RA rabbi without the specific written approval of the JPC, the congregation may lose future placement privileges.
- o Similar rules apply to rabbinic candidates as well.

The JPC and its director have several areas of responsibility in addition to administering the placement procedures: counseling both rabbis and synagogue search committees, creating programs on transition issues and the dynamics of leadership change and serving as a resource for the broad process of integrating a new rabbi into a congregation. In order for the placement process to proceed as smoothly as possible, we are available to inform both congregations and rabbis about the workings of the placement process. The international director of placement, Rabbi Schoenberg writes, speaks and teaches widely about issues of placement at regional and national conferences of both the USCJ and the RA. The placement process of the leader of an organization in general, and of a synagogue in particular, is a nervous time for the organization, both for its members and its staff, as well as for prospective candidates who will lead the organization. The JPC, through the director, assists rabbis in understanding the placement process and has a strong responsibility to congregations that are searching for rabbis. Congregations are just as anxious as rabbis. We are always available to congregations and search committees to answer questions and to be responsive to situations as they develop.

Finally, the JPC is aware that both congregations and rabbis need support during the search period. Congregations also need support in creating the right emotional climate for the new rabbi to be accepted and succeed as the new leader. Leadership changes are difficult. Thus, the JPC has resources in the area of transition management. The annual *עַת רִצּוֹן Eit Ratzon* Conference, held each year in the late spring, is a time set aside for rabbis changing pulpits and their congregational leadership to study the complex issues of transition.

You may always turn to the director of the JPC, Rabbi Schoenberg, for counseling. Because telephone time is limited, it is best to make as many inquiries as possible by email, referring all routine matters and requests to the JPC's assistant. It is helpful to reserve Rabbi Schoenberg's time for advice in advance. Rabbi Schoenberg also coordinates senior student placement, interview week, and the interim rabbi program. Contact Rabbi Schoenberg's assistant: phone (212) 280-6000; fax (212) 749-9166; placement@rabbinicalassembly.org or eschoenberg@rabbinicalassembly.org for the director. The JPC office is open from 9:00 am-5:00 pm, Monday through Friday EST. We close one hour before sunset on Friday in the winter months. The best hours to call are after 10:00 am and before 4:00 pm.

United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (USCJ)

The USCJ can serve as a valuable resource to congregations during the rabbinic search. The USCJ, founded in 1913 by Dr. Solomon Schechter, today serves close to 650 Conservative synagogues throughout North America. The organization plays an active role in all areas of synagogue life, including the placement of synagogue professionals. The JPC strongly recommends that the congregation contact the USCJ at the inception of the search process. The USCJ can offer valuable guidance, particularly from the congregation's perspective. As the process of engaging a rabbi unfolds, the congregation may wish to discuss with the USCJ specific issues relating to a candidate's proposed relationship with the congregation. We ask you to be in touch with your USCJ *kehilla* manager immediately if you have not done so already. They will help you get started by visiting with your search committee and reviewing your documents.

Rabbinical Assembly (RA)

The RA, established in 1901, is the international association of Conservative Rabbis. The RA is the home for conservative rabbis, and the leading source for meaning, relevance and wisdom, providing inspiration for life grounded deeply in *Torah*. Its 1600 members serve as pulpit rabbis, educators, military and hospital chaplains, professors of Judaism, and officers of communal service organizations throughout the world. While the majority of the men and women of the RA serve in the United States and Canada, there are many serving in Israel, Latin America, South Africa, Sweden and throughout the rest of Europe.

The RA Committee on Jewish Law and Standards responds to inquiries on Jewish law and practice for the Conservative Movement and has embarked upon a program of publishing the responsa issued throughout the decades of its existence. The RA serves the professional and personal needs of its membership through professional publications, continuing education programs, conferences and benefits programs. It fosters the spirit of fellowship and cooperation among rabbis and other Jewish scholars, promotes Jewish learning among the rabbinate in particular, and cooperates with those who devote themselves to the needs of the community and to Israel.

Conservative Seminaries

There are four seminaries recognized as part of our Conservative Movement.

The Jewish Theological Seminary, founded in 1886, is the premier center for the academic study of Judaism in North America, and is the spiritual center of Conservative Judaism. The Seminary has a total student body exceeding 550 and a faculty of some 100 full-time and part-time scholars. There are about 150 students currently attending the Rabbinical School. Dr. Arnold Eisen has been chancellor since June 2007. The Rabbinical School, based at the New York campus, offers a five-year program of study and religious development which leads to rabbinic ordination. The degree of Master of Arts is awarded during the course of the program. Rabbinical School, The Jewish Theological Seminary, 3080 Broadway, Box 133, New York, NY 10027; (212) 678-8067; fax (212) 678-8974.

The Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies at the University of Judaism was founded in 1996 to provide an extraordinary blend of academic rigor, emotional warmth, openness, traditional scholarship and innovative spirit in the service of God, Torah and Israel. The School fuses the methods and findings of the academic study of Judaism with the fervor and devotion of traditional study and observance. Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson is the dean of the Ziegler School, and a vice president of the University of Judaism and Rabbi Cheryl Peretz is associate dean. The Ziegler School offers a five-year program of study and spiritual formation that leads to rabbinic ordination. The Ziegler School is a part of the vision of Rabbis Mordecai Kaplan and Simon Greenberg, the spiritual fathers of the University of Judaism, who, in 1947, established an institution that would reflect the broadest possible conception of Judaism and embrace all forms of Jewish creativity and educational achievement. The Ziegler is a national institution that includes an undergraduate college, the nation's largest Jewish adult education program, graduate schools in Jewish education, and a Masters in Business Administration focusing on non-profit administration. Rabbi Robert Wexler assumed the presidency of the Ziegler school in 1992. Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies, University of Judaism, 15600 Mulholland Dr., Bel Air, CA 90077-1599; (310) 476-9777; fax (310) 476-7768; ziegler@uj.edu.

Schechter Rabbinical School, located in Jerusalem next to the Israel Museum, Knesset and Israeli Supreme Court, was established in 1984 with 4 rabbinical students. Since 1988, the Schechter Rabbinical School has ordained 65 rabbis who have assumed leadership positions in Israel and around the world. The Schechter Rabbinical Seminary integrates commitment to the study of Jewish tradition with a tolerant, pluralistic outlook, concern for the welfare of Israeli society as a whole and integration of traditional study of Jewish sources with modern, critical methodology. The rabbinical seminary training is a four-year, full-time program of studies. The students become proficient in all aspects of Jewish studies, including Bible, Rabbinics, Jewish thought and Jewish history. As future community leaders, they also study education, psychology and sociology and participate in practicum training during each year of study. Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, 4 Avraham Granot St., Jerusalem, Israel, 91160, tel: 972-747-800-600, pr@schechter.ac.il, www.schechter.edu

Seminario Rabbinico Latinoamericano "Marshall T. Meyer" was founded in 1962 by Rabbi Marshall T. Meyer (of blessed memory). The Seminario Rabbinico Latinoamericano is the academic, cultural and religious center of the Conservative Jewish movement (Masorti) in Argentina and Latin America. The main goal of the Seminary is to train and ordain rabbis with

the aim of spreading and perpetuating Judaism in Latin American communities. Rabbis from the seminario currently work at congregations in Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Peru, Brazil, Colombia, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Mexico, Paraguay, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, San Salvador, Aruba, and also in the United States and Israel. Identified with the principles of the Conservative Movement, these rabbis are trained to convey a religious and spiritual leadership based on the reality, culture and dynamics of Latin American communities. Seminario Rabbinico Latinamericano, Jose Hernandez 1750 Capital, C1426EOD Buenos Aires, Argentina 54 11 4783-2009/ 54 11 4783-6175 Fax No. 54 11 4781-4056 info@seminariorabinico.org.ar

In addition, those ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary of Budapest, Hungary may also be granted membership in the RA and are eligible for placement in our movement's congregations.

PART II: SELF REFLECTION

לֵב נָבוֹן, יִבְקֹשׁ-דַּעַת;

"The mind of a prudent person seeks knowledge." (Proverbs 15:14)

Social science research tells us that most people are extroverts, and that the need for introspection comes infrequently. Our organizations reflect our members and most non-profit organizations, including synagogues, spend little time being reflective. In our travels over the last 20 years, we have observed that roughly 90% of synagogues have done little self-reflection or evaluation of their values, their needs, or their future. Sitting down to fill out the congregational questionnaire is often the first time a synagogue committee reflects as a group on the needs and aspirations of their congregation. Sadly, the handful of synagogues who have done strategic plans rarely follow through on the recommendations. Some synagogues do go through a process of reflection, but rarely does it impact on the everyday life of the congregation or the congregants. It is a trap is to think that there is no need to be introspective or to engage in a *heshbon hanefesh* when looking for a new rabbi. Rather, it is imperative that a congregation self-reflect and evaluate its current situation before beginning the search for a new rabbi. Most congregations do an inadequate job of filling out the congregational questionnaire. When asked, "What are you looking for in your new rabbi?" many answer, "a *mensh*," "a spiritual leader" or "someone charismatic." These descriptions are inadequate because platitudes cannot serve as guidelines to help the congregation distinguish between candidates. Remarkably, even congregations without young families or a Hebrew school have put down in their written materials that they need a "young rabbi who is good with children." The motto of the JPC is, "You are not looking for the best rabbi, you are looking for the best rabbinic fit for your particular congregation."

For you to complete your search successful in one placement season, a congregational reflection needs to be founded on intention, honesty and public discussion. Intention means approaching this task with discipline. Congregational assessment is constantly going on after all, in the parking lot and over the *Shabbat* dinner table. The trap to avoid is voices that are the loudest are heard the most. This imbalance often occurs when reflection is done without discipline. The committee must be intentional in seeking the most accurate picture of the synagogue, not just the image of the few.

In addition, when the reflection is without discipline it often only reflects an internal conversation and not the insights of those on the outside. How has the community changed? How has the town changed? What do outsiders think of us? With discipline, an organized inquiry will ask hard questions of insiders and outsiders. For example, a few years ago, an executive recruiter was asked by the director of the New York and New Jersey Port Authority to help recruit a new Director of Aviation. This job involves overseeing the four major airports in the metropolitan area, dealing with the terminals, slots for planes, and ground transportation. The recruiter found himself in a world of aviation peopled by alumni of the Air Force and aircraft industry. The assumption was that the new director would be found in this milieu. When the recruiter began to probe for the critical challenges that the new director would actually face in the coming years, however, the list was dominated by issues of ground transportation and problems with luggage handling systems, suggesting that more appropriate candidates might be found in the ground transportation industry, not in the air industry. This recruiter understood that he would best serve

the Port Authority if he found a Director of Aviation who knew more about buses, baggage and scheduling than about airplanes! A congregation should always bear in mind that it is not looking for the best rabbi, but for the best match for their congregation. For example, a congregation knows it requires a rabbi who is comfortable with pastoral care and youth work, but is awestruck after a particular candidate delivers an inspiring sermon on her *Shabbat* visit. She may be the best public speaker among the applicants but she may not be the right match for this low-key synagogue seeking a rabbi who emphasizes individual pastoral work with congregants.

To be helpful, self-reflection needs to be honest. We need to ask good questions of ourselves and our institutions. Isidor I. Rabi, the Nobel Laureate in physics, was once asked, “Why did you become a scientist, rather than a doctor or lawyer or businessman, like the other immigrant kids in your neighborhood?” “My mother made me a scientist without ever intending it. Every other Jewish mother in Brooklyn would ask her child after school: ‘Nu? Did you learn anything today?’ But not my mother. She always asked me a different question. ‘Izzy,’ she would say, ‘Did you ask a good question today?’ That difference – asking good questions – enabled me to become a scientist.” Self-reflection is all about asking good, hard questions and getting good honest answers. As we know, it is not always easy to get honest answers.

When you engage in reflection it is critical to describe your synagogue as it operates now, not as you wish it to be or as you hope it will become. Be candid about all aspects of your congregation. It is important to be as honest as possible, because one of the criteria in choosing your rabbi should be what strengths and experience he or she may bring to improve those areas of your synagogue life that need to be strengthened. It is wise to remember that you are looking for the rabbi that will fit well with your history, culture and past accomplishments. Only when a synagogue has a realistic grasp of its situation can it find a rabbi who will meet its real needs.

Third, the reflection needs to be public and communal. Otherwise, the process may not accurately reflect the congregation. How should you gather the information? The JPC recommends a series of small public meetings usually called focus groups. The best method is for the search committee to meet personally with as many constituent groups of the congregation as possible. These focus groups will provide a much fuller and more honest picture of the congregation’s past and present congregational needs than congregational surveys. Social scientists inform us that organizational surveys often elicit the extreme points of view – the anger of the most dissatisfied and the blind infatuation of the highly satisfied. Focus groups provide an opportunity to forge a consensus of priority and a consensus of direction. Congregations tell us that focus groups are one of the most helpful and powerful experiences of the search process. It invites “buy-in” and participation from the entire community (see **Appendix C**). After several public meetings a pattern of satisfactions and concerns will emerge. An intentional, honest and public process will help you find the right match for your community.

Google and LinkedIn

Your rabbinic candidates will be searching for your congregation online. You need to update your website so the information is current. You should do a search for your congregation on Google. And you should investigate your community's reputation on websites like LinkedIn.

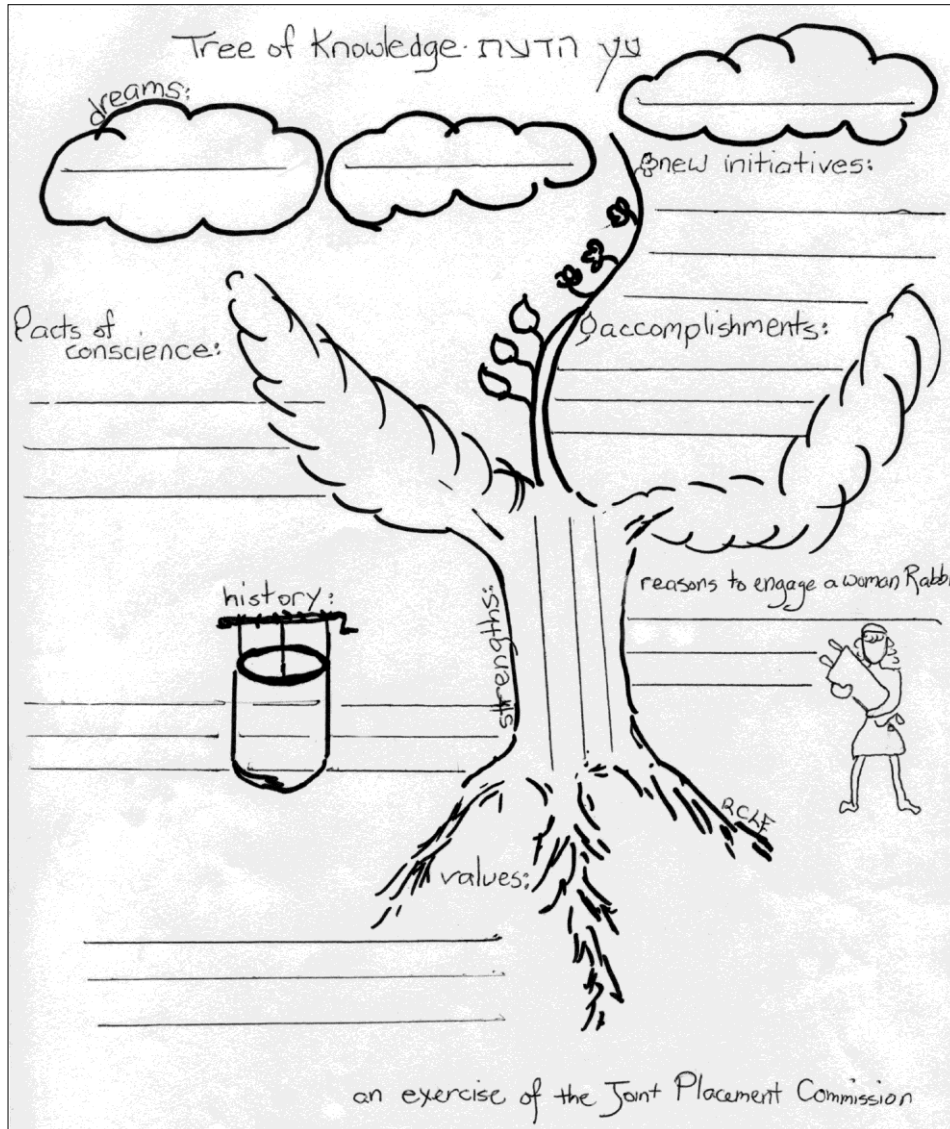
The Process -Tree of Knowledge Exercise

וַיֵּצֵא אֱלֹהִים, מִן-הָאֲדָמָה, כָּל-עֵץ נֹחֵם לְמִרְאָה וְטוֹב לְמַאֲכָל--וְעֵץ הַחַיִּים, בְּתוֹךְ הַגֶּן, וְעֵץ, הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע

"And out of the ground the Lord God made grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the middle of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil."(Genesis 2:9)

Intentional, honest and public self-understanding is the key step that makes it possible to select the right match for your congregation. The more open and honest your work, the easier time you will have to elect a rabbi who will meet the needs of your congregation. Ideally, when the candidate asks a committee of 15 people what they are looking for in their next rabbi, the rabbi can receive one precise, well thought-out answer rather than fifteen divergent ones. The JPC realizes this is no easy task. We have developed a tool, called the "Tree of Knowledge" exercise, to make possible this introspection in a more structured way. Tradition interprets the quoted above verse as speaking of the Torah as the source of wisdom and understanding. In your process, we hope the Tree of Knowledge exercise will be a source of wisdom and understanding about the congregation.

Tree of Knowledge Exercise



When you look at the Tree of Knowledge diagram you will see it is a forced choice exercise. In each section, you may only pick three answers. Limiting it to three makes possible intention and discipline. This exercise is best done in small groups, there should be an agreed upon consensus in a public process. When the groups have finished their task, then facilitate a public discussion to validate or repudiate the findings of each group. As you fill in the diagram you will engage the creative energy of the left side of the brain.

The roots of the tree represent the values of the congregation.

THE TASK: Name three values of the congregation.

The well represents the past history of the congregation.

THE TASK: Name three stories that you will tell the new rabbi so she will appreciate the culture and past of your congregation.

The trunk represents the strengths of the congregation.

THE TASK: Name three things the congregation is most proud of.

The branches of the tree represent the moral-religious voice of the congregation.

THE TASK: Name the three most important religious commitments of the congregation at this moment.

The buds represent the new activities of the synagogue.

THE TASK: Name three initiatives of the congregation begun this year.

The cloud represents the dreams of the future.

THE TASK: Name three long terms hopes or desires.

Finally, the women holding the Torah represent engaging a women rabbi.

THE TASK: Name three reasons the congregation is ready to engage a women rabbi at this time.

Since you probably will meet a number of candidates, each of whom fulfills only part of your rabbinic “wish list,” a consensus of your congregation’s values, strengths and priorities will make your task of making decisions about candidates much easier.

The Questionnaire

The Search Committee now has a good grasp of the congregation's three top priorities. You are ready to work on the JPC’s questionnaire using the input from the Tree of Knowledge exercise and the public discussion of the focus groups. The questionnaire is your first contact with potential candidates and the foremost source of facts about a congregation. It presents your synagogue’s characteristics to interested rabbis. It is similar to the biographical sketch that your congregation will receive from the interested rabbis. Rabbis often ask to see the questionnaire before asking that their resumes be forwarded to a congregation. Rabbis take questionnaires very

seriously. They read and screen them carefully. Rabbis call them the congregation's "resume." A wise congregation understands this and responds appropriately. There is no limit to how many different questionnaires a rabbi may request. The questionnaire gives your first impression and your first opportunity to market yourself to individual rabbis.

You may find the questionnaire lengthy at first. Your committee will work hard and deliberate deeply to fill it out. Rather than see the length as an obstacle, frame it as an opportunity to do the proper preparation work for the search. See the questionnaire as a guide, expand it as necessary to complete the picture of your congregation. The questionnaire should fully tell the story of your congregation's achievements and contributions.

Use the information gleaned from the Tree of Knowledge exercise as the basis to build your questionnaire. As your committee wrestles with the questions, your congregation's strengths and needs should become clearer. Use this questionnaire as a starting point to assess your congregation's strengths and weaknesses, to identify constituent groups, and to develop a complete picture of where you are and where you want to go. It is critical that the information in the questionnaire (especially opinion questions) reflect a congregational consensus, not the opinion of a few individuals. A questionnaire filled out by one individual will appeal to a candidate who matches the expectations of one individual, not the full range of the congregation. The more specific information you provide the candidate, the more helpful you will be. The more the candidates know about your congregation, the deeper will be their understanding of it. This understanding helps to clarify if an individual would be comfortable as the rabbi of your community.

“Job Description” of a Rabbi

The JPC is often asked if we have a “job description” for a rabbi. We do not. Instead we suggest everyone focus on the roles of the rabbi and not the tasks of the rabbi. The JPC has found it more helpful to congregations in the search process to prioritize a list of general rabbinic roles, than to try and detail specific tasks. A "role" is the general function that a rabbi will provide for the congregation. (See **Appendix J** for a list of Roles of the Rabbi) Your task is to identify three or four roles that are the key to your synagogue's future. As the economy has tightened, congregations report the wisdom of this process. Some congregations feel overwhelmed by the number of resumes they have received and unable to take a clear path. If at the outset of your preparation you have highlighted three or four roles as most important to your congregation, you can refer to those priorities. You can assess candidates in light of those roles and your path will become clearer. These critical roles now become the anchor of your search so your committee can stay focused.

A detailed “job description” for the rabbi is often unhelpful. First, there are too many variables to the congregational rabbinate that it makes a general job description inaccurate. The tasks of the rabbi vary by congregational size, history and location and by interest and background of the rabbi. In a smaller congregation, the rabbi may be the Torah reader because he is the only one with that skill set. In a larger congregation, the rabbi may be the Torah reader because that is the historical definition of what a rabbi does there. For example, we worked with

one congregation of almost 500 units that said the rabbi reads Torah. When we asked why they said “he always did.” When we did some homework we discovered this congregation has doubled in size in the last ten years and had new congregants with the skills and interest to read the Torah. This congregation was moving to a new chapter in its history. If the new rabbi needed to read Torah like the previous rabbis, it would limit the congregation’s choices and it would not allow the rabbi to carry the new priorities of the congregation. The synagogue needed a rabbi whose Torah reading skills were good enough, but not excellent. A task that was once a high priority was no longer critical. Second, a successful rabbi is expected to be a leader. The role of the rabbi is to make a difference in the life of the congregation and the lives of individual members. Specifying a set of tasks the rabbi must fulfill tends to put the rabbi inside a box that limits creativity, initiative and statesmanship. Reflecting on different rabbinic roles allows the congregation and the rabbi to see the religious leader as a whole. Setting the priorities of the role provides the opportunity for a view of the big picture.

What is the rabbi’s role? There are times in a rabbi’s work when one or another area of responsibility takes precedence, and there are certain roles which predominate, either because they are a rabbi’s strength or because they are a synagogue’s mission and culture. For each member of the search committee and of the congregation, one particular aspect of the work of the rabbi may be more important than all the others because of their memory of their rabbi growing up. Rabbis each have an image of their role in the congregation. In addition, each congregation as a whole, each congregational committee as a sub-group and each congregant as an individual has their own expectation about the rabbi’s role. Moreover, we all have our own memory of the rabbinic role we grew up with in our home congregation. It is a process to work to find a consensus among the members of the search committee about which roles of the rabbi are most important to the congregation at this time in its history. That is why the prior discussion of congregational self-reflection is so vital. The goal is to develop an understanding of the three or four central roles of the incoming rabbi needs for the congregation’s future well-being. (**Appendix J** at the end of this booklet is designed to facilitate this conversation.) The conclusion of this process is that you have set three priorities for the role of the rabbi and your committee can articulate them to the candidates and the rest of the congregation.

Willingness to be Self-Reflective

The period of looking for a rabbi can be a very fruitful time for your congregation to learn about itself. The Tree of Knowledge is a metaphor in the Jewish tradition for sustenance and growth. The story is told of Honi the circle maker. When he was an old man, he was planting a sapling. A Roman noble happened by and inquired why he was planting a tree whose benefits he would not live to enjoy. Honi responded, “Just as my grandparents planted for me so I might enjoy the benefits of the tree, I am planting so the next generation will benefit from my labor.” As your congregation transitions from one rabbi to the next, it is a propitious time to examine the past, to study the congregational system, to evaluate past achievements and to suggest future direction. Like Honi, we draw on the present and the past to create the future. Intentional self-reflection is a process which can help us to affirm positive behaviors and to acknowledge that other patterns should be changed. When searching for a new rabbi, the more willing you are to be introspective about your congregation’s culture, the more ready you are to ask hard questions and

the more reflective you are about spiritual directions, the more accurate your understanding will be of your congregation. The more you understand your congregation, the easier it will be to find a rabbi who is a great match for you. While conducting a self-study, you will synthesize the affirmations of the past so you will be able to create a positive future.

Submitting the Questionnaire

Does something in the questionnaire stump you? Just ask! Both the JPC and the USCJ staff can help you fill out the questionnaire. When you have finished a first draft of the questionnaire, distribute a copy to all members of your search committee and to the incumbent rabbi to elicit their reactions.

Once you have filled it out completely, upload the questionnaire to your eplacement account. Rabbi Schoenberg will review the document to make sure it presents your congregation in language that rabbis appreciate, and will discuss it with the chair of your search committee. The JPC reviews each questionnaire personally with the chair of your search committee. The JPC provides individual attention and advice to your search committee. The questionnaire is a computer template. You should fill it out as is, with no changes to the questions. If you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to be in touch with us.

Diversity of the Rabbinate

The modern Conservative rabbinate comes from diverse backgrounds. Graduates of our seminaries are young and old, male and female, gay and straight, at the beginning of their first career and starting a new career, introverted and extroverted, born Jewish and righteous converts. The graduates come from all over the world, they are single, married, divorced and some have children. Spiritual leaders come in all shapes and sizes. The JPC believes strongly that congregations do themselves a disservice if they insist that their next religious leader fulfill a 1950s traditional family stereotype, in which the male is the head of the household, while the wife stays home and cares for their two perfect children. Our Placement Director often says to them "If your congregation focuses on such extraneous characteristics, you severely limit your options. You should look for the rabbi that is the best fit for your current situation." Remember your reflective process, the priorities you decided upon for your religious leader and then consider which candidates meet those needs. See **Appendix B** for the official statement of diversity agreed upon by the Leadership Council of Conservative Judaism distributed to all congregations and movement organizations. We recall the words of our sage Rabbi Judah, "Don't look at the bottle, but what is inside." There is still much work to be done to have spiritual leaders match the diversity of our membership.

The JPC does not expect your congregation to engage a particular candidate for the sake of diversity. The JPC wants you to expand your search as you seek the right candidate, not narrow it. Business research suggests that sometimes businesses unconsciously limit their search to people who look like the person who is the hiring manager. The JPC will work with you to ensure that your congregation will avoid this trap, and instead, will cast your net broadly for your next spiritual leader.

Engaging a Woman Rabbi

In 2010, the RA was proud to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the admission of the first woman rabbi to membership. 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 a female rabbi over a period of years, for many other congregations that have not searched for a rabbi in a long time, the consideration of female rabbi is still uncharted territory.

The JPC is unequivocally committed to equal opportunity for its female members. Furthermore, it is the policy of the JPC that a congregation cannot refuse to interview a rabbi on the basis of their gender. It is our expectation that congregations will elect rabbis to serve them on the basis of their qualifications and experience regardless of gender. 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 must rely on the maximal use of the talents of all of our members. To the extent that congregations are challenged by the idea of engaging a woman as their religious leader, we believe that such a challenge can be an enormously fruitful, enhancing and productive process for a congregation. We have found that in order for you to achieve a gender-neutral search process, you may need to do some preparatory groundwork.

We suggest that you thoughtfully create avenues through which your congregation can explore its feelings about engaging a woman rabbi. You might convene focus groups or small meetings just to explore congregants' thoughts about female rabbis. An open search committee meeting or a discussion after *kiddush* on Shabbat can provide public venues for conversations to air the concerns of members. (**Appendix H** of this book includes suggested guidelines for a focus group on the issue of women rabbis.) Ideally, in these small groups, you could use a facilitator from outside the congregation, or if necessary, from within the congregation, to ensure that such a focus group is productive. The point of designating a trained facilitator to structure your congregation's conversation is that discussions about core values such as gender roles can become angry and confrontational if they are not properly managed. Assuring congregants that a facilitator will moderate the encounter may overcome their reluctance to engage in a situation of potential conflict. A successful meeting has wider benefits than laying out members' feelings about female rabbis. When you can respectfully elicit the deep feelings of your members in such a safe environment, you strengthen the congregation.

We have seen congregations that are eager to include women candidates in their searches, where a few members of the congregation are ardently opposed to this possibility, even to the point of threatening to leave the congregation should the search committee consider women candidates. Given the strong bonds of people within a synagogue community, leaders take such threats seriously. What is a congregation to do in situations like this one? In cases where a few individuals can be identified as opposed to considering women candidates, in contrast to the majority of the congregation, members of the search committee could approach such individuals respectfully and on a one-on-one basis to address their fears, so that the public venue of a focus group can remain a positive atmosphere. It is often helpful to have one of the individual's peers on the Search Committee meet with them to discuss their ideas about the rabbinic search overall and their anxiety about engaging a woman rabbi. It is the experience of the JPC that congregants who oppose female rabbis are in the minority, but with the acknowledgement that their voice has been heard, they will feel that they are a respected part of the congregation. The task of the search

committee is to find ways to acknowledge their concerns.

The JPC understands that even though women rabbis have been ordained for 25 years, this may be the first time your congregation is exploring the possibility of engaging a woman rabbi. Naturally it will raise questions in the minds of some congregants. The experience of the JPC is that a public forum is an opportunity to allow congregants to voice these concerns and to allow the search committee to respectfully address their issues. It is the job of the search committee representative to try to move the conversation from inchoate assumptions such as “a women shouldn’t be the rabbi here,” to the articulation of more specific concerns that can be more readily addressed.

In the final analysis, not everyone can agree on every aspect of a rabbinic search. Some individuals' long-held assumptions may not turn around in time for the hiring of a new rabbi. We often hear stories from female colleagues about beautiful interactions that they have had with congregants who admit to having been opposed to the hiring of a woman; almost never do we hear about people leaving a congregation because a woman was hired. Regrettably, what we do hear about are congregations who do not even consider women candidates because they are afraid that someone, somewhere in the congregation will be unhappy. These cases are a loss to everybody, the candidates, the congregation, and even to those resisting, who may be denying themselves the opportunity to get to know a fine rabbi who is prepared to ably serve their congregation and teach Torah.

Ideally, you might undertake some of the work towards building an acceptance of a gender-neutral search long before you become actively involved with the search process. You could be reading this book because you know that your rabbi will be retiring in a few years. If so, time is a gift that you can use to bring women rabbis to the congregation as scholars, speakers and preachers on a variety of topics. (We actually recommend that women not be invited to speak about “women’s issues,” as such activity can reinforce the stereotype of women as “other” rather than as talented rabbis with expertise in any number of areas of Jewish interest.) Our female colleagues are abundantly talented and well versed in many areas of Jewish scholarship; we find that the invitation of women rabbis to serve as scholars-in-residence in our congregations is one of the most effective ways of breaking down residual barriers to women’s leadership.

In some congregations, you will have to address what we would call “lifecycle” concerns. Women become pregnant and give birth, whereas men do not. What is a congregation to do while a rabbi is out on maternity leave? The RA and USCJ Joint Model Contract calls for three months of maternity leave with full pay and benefits when a rabbi gives birth to or adopts a child. Our movement strongly believes that the importance of family life is a preeminent Jewish value and that this value must be modeled in the congregation’s relationship to rabbis and their families. While the model contract does not specify a period of time for paternity leave, the RA strongly encourages congregations to make such family time possible for fathers and their new babies. It is important to see that congregational needs get met during a period of maternity leave and this period of uncertainty is something that can make congregations nervous. Most congregations find that the challenge of making maternity leave work is an opportunity to strengthen the congregation and to reinforce its core values. Often, leaders are pleasantly surprised as congregants step forward to *lein*, *daven* and offer help during their rabbi's maternity leave. You will want to engage a woman rabbi even if she plans on taking maternity leave, because she is the right fit for you congregation.

There are some other gender issues of “lifestyle” that are based on preconceived notions of gender roles that you will want to address realistically, helping members of the congregation to distinguish between their legitimate questions and unfounded assumptions. (See **Appendix I**) An interview committee sometimes asks different questions of female and male candidates. It is important that interview committees review their questions carefully before undertaking to interview candidates to ensure that men and women are being treated equally in the interview process. The US government has declared that certain questions are illegal to ask a candidate even though they may be on everyone's minds. If you ask such questions, candidates feel that their boundaries have been violated. It is not accurate to assume that a woman will devote more time to her family and less time to the congregation than her male counterpart. It is not appropriate to ask candidates about when and if they plan to marry and have families. Search committees should accept the self-reflection of their candidates and not try to second-guess decisions that candidates have already made.

In 2004, the RA conducted a study of our members entitled: “Gender Variation in the Careers of Conservative Rabbis: A Survey of Rabbis Ordained Since 1985.” Noted researcher Dr. Steven M. Cohen of the Hebrew University conducted the study. It is available on the public section of the RA website (rabbinicalassembly.org). We undertook the study because we had anecdotal evidence that our female colleagues were subject to career barriers not placed before their male colleagues.

Our study showed that women earned less than their male counterparts for the same work. It is certainly not appropriate to compensate a woman any differently than her male counterpart. It is not acceptable to attempt to calculate the earning power of a rabbi's husband in determining her salary or benefits. Our research also indicated that women had more difficulty in gaining access to the interviews they sought. It is imperative to the health of our movement that congregations interview candidates based on their qualifications, not based on their gender. Another important piece of data that came from our survey is the fact that women widely report an uncomfortable atmosphere in their work environments, particularly in the pulpit, with 27% of women reporting negative comments related to their age and 58% having heard negative comments about their gender. These are important findings which we encourage you to share with your community.

We can summarize this section by recalling the basic teaching of the JPC: A congregation should always bear in mind that it is not looking for the best rabbi, but for the best match for the congregation. The very best match for your congregation may well be a female rabbi.

PART III: THE SEARCH PROCESS

ועת לבקש, ועת לאבד,
ועת להשמור, ועת להשליך.

“A time for seeking and a time for losing, a time for keeping and a time for discarding.”
(Ecclesiastes 3:6)

Abraham ben David Halevi ibn Daud, also known as the Rabad, was a Spanish historian, philosopher, physician and astronomer. He spent most of his life in Toledo, where in 1160 he wrote *Sefer HaKabbalah*. *Sefer HaKabbalah* is a defense of Judaism through history. Overall, the book demonstrates the chain of continuity from generation to generation. Its most famous story is about the four rabbinic captives. This story is the Rabad's attempt to explain how rabbinic Judaism and rabbinic leadership moved from Babylonia to Spain. It not only gives hope to the Jews of the 12th century but offers significant insights into finding a rabbi in the 21st century. Here is a summary of the story:

The commander of the Spanish fleet captured a boat off the coast of Greece that contained four Jewish scholars. Each of the four rabbis were sold by the captain as slaves to four different communities. The last to be sold was Rabbi Moses, who was redeemed by the people of Cordoba, Spain, who thought he was uneducated. Cordoba had a synagogue but no rabbi. On the day that Rabbi Moses came, Mr. Nathan was teaching the laws of immersion of the high priest on Yom Kippur. Rabbi Moses corrected him. The community was eager to learn more. The students took out their notebooks and asked him the questions that they had saved up over time because there had been no rabbinic authority to teach them. Mr. Nathan said, “You need to appoint this stranger dressed in rags as the judge of this community of Cordoba.” So Rabbi Moses became their rabbinic leader.

What do we learn from this story? Even though Cordoba did not have a learned rabbinic leader, they still studied. The community already existed with a Jewish infrastructure. Rabbi Moses came all the way from famous and important Babylonia to lead another good community. He transformed it by bringing his knowledge with him. What does this teach us about the search for a rabbi a thousand years later? Selecting a rabbinic leader is of paramount importance to a community. Most often the new rabbinic leader will come from outside the community and will be a stranger to the community. The community has its resources, achievements and assets which the new rabbi will use as a base to build on. Then and now, good questions help discern the fit of the candidate to the needs of the community.

How Does a Synagogue Begin the Search Process?

STEP ONE: Go to the RA website: <http://www.rabbinicalassembly.org> and click on 'eplacement' and then scroll to 'Congregation. The registration form will now appear. Complete the registration/acknowledgement form. The asterisk (*) indicates required fields. Enter your own login name and password. Record your login and password information because you will need it later to access your account.

STEP TWO: When you are ready, click on 'submit' indicating you have accepted the “Placement

Code.” The JPC will review your registration/acknowledgement form. In a day or so you will be notified whether you have been approved for placement. You may download several resources from the congregation's eplacement account: 1) The “Model Engagement Agreement” is the mutually accepted standard contract advocated by the USCJ and the RA since 1991. 2) “Cover letter” is a brief introduction to the process. 3) The “congregational questionnaire” is the document you need to complete to present the congregation to the candidates. The completed questionnaire is the foremost source of facts, values and stories about your congregation to the rabbis.

STEP THREE: Fill out the congregational questionnaire (a copy of which you may find by logging into your account and going to the ‘congregational information’ page.)

STEP FOUR: When you have completed the blank questionnaire, log back into your account and go to ‘Congregation Information’ and click on the section that says ‘Placement Documents.’ Then use the ‘browse’ tab to upload your questionnaire from your own computer or whatever storage device you used, such as a flash or thumb drive.

STEP FIVE: The JPC will review your submitted “congregational questionnaire” making certain that all the questions have been answered completely and that the congregation meets the standards of the USCJ. The USCJ will confirm to the JPC that the congregation is a member in good standing of the Conservative Movement. If the congregation is not a member in good standing the application process cannot proceed. At the same time, the JPC will e-mail the incumbent rabbi to confirm the availability of the position so that the search can begin. The incumbent rabbi must confirm in writing or via e-mail that he or she is leaving and that all is squared away between the rabbi and congregation (see **Appendix A**). Usually this is all that is needed for the process to begin.

Your congregation contact person will be notified via email that the registration process is complete and the congregation is now ‘posted’ for placement with the JPC.

Receiving Resumes

When all these conditions have been satisfied, the congregation will be posted for placement. “Posting” means your synagogue will be added to the placement list found in the member’s section of the RA website. The placement newsletter, or the “yellow sheet,” is no longer mailed to RA members. Via the web, the placement list is distributed internationally to RA members in Europe, Israel and South America, in addition to all RA rabbis in North America. There is no posting deadline. Once you upload the questionnaire to eplacement, rabbis will view the congregation's profile in real time.

Rabbis interested in applying to your congregation will submit resumes through eplacement which the JPC forwards to your congregation. The JPC is the only agent in the Conservative Movement that is permitted to forward a resume to a congregation. All contact between rabbis and congregations must be initiated by and through the JPC. The congregation will continue to be listed on the placement list until you confirm that your vacancy is filled. All resumes will be forwarded by e-mail to the address designated in your original registration page. Resumes are sent electronically thru the eplacement system.

Rolling Referrals and Reference Checking

The JPC sends candidate referrals to congregations. Who is referred? How does it work? When a rabbi requests that his or her resume be forwarded to a particular congregation, the JPC sends that resume to the congregation as soon as possible. There is no minimum or maximum number of resumes that a congregation may receive. Any candidate who is eligible by seniority, who is a member in good standing of the RA and otherwise meets the standards set in the Placement Code (see **Appendix A**) may request that his or her resume be forwarded.

The JPC does not prescreen resumes. Reference checking is the responsibility of the congregation, NOT the JPC.

We advocate that all references be checked in detail and that you consult multiple sources. The JPC believes that the decision of who is a good match for the congregation belongs to the congregation itself, as it does to the rabbi. Each congregation will establish criteria that work for it. Since there is no initial screening of resumes by the JPC, your congregation will receive resumes of all interested candidates.

This open system has advantages as well as disadvantages. While your congregation receives a lot of resumes, the process may take more time than you first anticipated. Your congregation might delay your interviews in the hope that more candidates will apply. The number of resumes a congregation may receive varies; Since 2009, the numbers of candidates per position has greatly increased, a dozen is average even for small congregations (250 units or less). Highly desirable congregations often receive more than thirty resumes.

Your congregation may receive resumes as long as your position is listed, but we strongly recommend a self-imposed cutoff date so that the process may proceed in a timely fashion. We recommend that a search committee no longer accept resumes after the congregation has been listed for three months, or when telephone interviews have been concluded. On the placement list, you can mark your position as 'in review' to let rabbis know you are no longer accepting new resumes but you have not made any decisions about candidates. A congregational listing marked 'in review' will no longer receive new resumes through the eplacement system. Don't delay your process. Good candidates will be pursued not only by your congregation but other congregations as well. Remember, the search committee should endeavor to make a decision in a timely fashion. The goal is to make a decision before Passover. When the congregation has made an offer to the rabbi and the rabbi has accepted, you can mark 'in discussion' on your congregation's eplacement account so that no new resumes will be forwarded.

Disclaimer

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

By sending a rabbi's resume to a synagogue for consideration, the JPC 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 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 JPC. Various issues about a rabbi's performance or conduct may be brought to the attention of the RA, and some of these may result in disciplinary action being taken by the Va'ad HaKovod or other arms of the Assembly. Some of these disciplinary actions are confidential, and would not be disclosed to the JPC or to other members of the RA. Accordingly, by sending a rabbi's resume to a synagogue for consideration, the JPC 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 to which they are applying any potentially relevant circumstances, including any disciplinary history, synagogues 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 JPC 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 leadership that applies to all areas of congregational life apply here very specifically. It is solely the responsibility of your synagogue's 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.

How the Process Applies to the Rabbi

Rabbinical candidates must meet the following four requirements: 1) The rabbi must be a member in good standing of the RA. 2) The rabbi must have their current electronic resume on file with the JPC. 3) The rabbi must be eligible to conclude his or her contract with his or her current congregation during the current placement season. 4) The rabbi must be eligible for service in a particular congregation corresponding to size of membership. Congregations are categorized as follows: An "A" congregation has fewer than 250 families; a "B" fewer than 500 families; a "C" fewer than 750 families; and a "D" more than 750 families. Rabbis qualify for "A", "B", "C", or "D" pulpits depending upon the number of years of membership in the RA. All rabbis qualify for "A" pulpits, including graduating senior students. A rabbi must have fulfilled two years of membership to qualify for a "B" pulpit, five years to qualify for a "C" pulpit, and ten years to qualify for a "D" pulpit. All rabbis qualify to be assistant and associate rabbis.

Please be aware that some rabbis may not have informed their congregations of their search. A rabbi may look for a new congregation before the completion of his or her current contract under the "window of opportunity" agreement between the USCJ and the RA. "The window of opportunity" allows the rabbi to look before the last year of his or her contract. Specifically, if a rabbi has a three-year contract, the rabbi may commence the search 18 months before the expiration date and any contract of more than four years allows the rabbi to search 24 months prior to expiration of the contract without formally notifying the congregational leadership (see **Appendix A**). Rabbis self refer using eplacement in real time. As soon as you open an account, the congregation will begin to receive resumes. Resumes are not held in the

placement office.

Search Committee Logistics

A rabbinic search committee should have a chair who is organized, responsible, respected, and committed to the tenets of Conservative Judaism. This individual should know how to run an effective and efficient meeting.

Who should be a member of the search committee? If your congregation is typical, every congregant wants to be a member of this committee. Most rabbinic search committees are made up of individuals representing many different points of view, with veteran members and new members, older members and younger members, including select past presidents. Not every position and every issue within the synagogue needs to be represented on the committee, but it is important that the committee members be sensitive to all synagogue constituencies and congregational issues. Committees often ask whether the incumbent rabbi or the rabbi emeritus should serve on the committee. The incumbent rabbi or the rabbi emeritus should have the opportunity to meet at a mutually convenient time with the search committee to share his or her views and to meet with possible candidates if warranted, but should not participate in interviewing a prospective rabbi. The outgoing rabbi should be kept informed of the search process. The outgoing rabbi can help with details and help define issues but should not be an active member of the search committee. Other synagogue personnel, such as the executive director, educational director and cantor, should not serve on the search committee or be present at an interview. At a suitable time, when a rabbi becomes a serious candidate for a post, it is appropriate for the candidates to meet all the key synagogue professionals so the candidate may be oriented to the specific culture and issues of the synagogue.

There is one major exception to this rule. The search for an assistant pulpit rabbi, and the role of the search committee in that process, differs from that of a senior rabbi. The senior rabbi must always have the right to approve or disapprove of his or her assistant. When a congregation is searching for an assistant or associate rabbi, it is imperative that the senior rabbi be on the committee and be present for all interviews. The senior rabbi, in fact, should be the prime interviewer and decision-maker with input from the committee. The congregational questionnaire has additional spaces for separate questions about the role of the assistant rabbi.

How many members should the committee have? A smaller committee makes decisions more easily. A larger committee's decision-making process becomes more difficult, but different points of view may be given fuller consideration. The search committee should involve as many members of the congregation as possible in learning about the congregation and its future challenges and gathering input regarding the scope of the rabbi's role. A much smaller number should do the actual screening and interviewing. There is no perfect number. Most committees function best with between eight and twelve members. In a survey of congregations that completed placements last year we asked the question, "What would you do differently next time?" The comment we heard most often was, "Our committee was too large. Both candidates and congregants would have benefited from a smaller committee." When a committee is too large, it not only hinders operations, but is off-putting to the candidate. The perfect search committee is a well-conceived mix of wide consultation and executive decision-making. The search committee is not autonomous but acts based on information and input from the Board and the entire

membership. It is crucial to the process that the authority delegated to the search committee be made clear to all involved parties so they may proceed smoothly with their work.

Take a moment to consider how the committee will function. It is helpful to establish ground rules for meetings and interviews. For example: Under what norms of behavior does the committee want to operate? How will different points of view be heard? How often will the committee meet? How will the committee as a whole be sensitive to divergent interests within the congregation? How will the committee make decisions? What happens when committee members have missed a meeting with a prospective candidate? Who will be taking notes? How will the meeting be concluded? These rules need to be considered and clarified. If you establish clear ground rules, your committee will function well no matter what the size.

The congregation needs to set aside a budget for the committee, both for travel and for related expenses of candidates and partners, plus miscellaneous items that will come to the attention of the committee. It may cost a good deal of money to interview several worthwhile candidates. Today, a rabbinic search costs between \$10,000-\$20,000 and some searches are even international. However, even if a congregation is under economic constraints, this is not the time to be shortsighted. Money you spend on the rabbinic search is a worthwhile investment in the future of the congregation.

Before interviewing candidates, the search committee should meet so its members can get to know each other and discover each other's concerns and attitudes. What resources do the members bring to this process? The committee should meet to discuss the nature of the synagogue and the rabbinic leadership it is looking for in the future. The search committee should lead the congregation's self-reflection process. The search committee with input from the congregation's membership must first determine the culture, the identity and the priorities of the synagogue before it can make the right match to lead the congregation into the future (see **Appendix C**). The meetings should be held in a fixed place which is secure so that records may be kept for members of the committee to review at their convenience. The preferred place for meeting is the synagogue because it adds to the stature of the occasion. The committee should be meeting and organizing long before you invite candidates to be interviewed.

Search Committee Expectations

What can a member of this committee expect from the process? A committee member has a serious responsibility – the future spiritual and religious direction of the synagogue. It will take many long hours of hard work to find the right person. Congregants who are not members of the search committee may be jealous which often leads to criticism of the committee. Members of the committee will have to agree that discussions with a candidate are confidential. Members of search committees often feel the task is much bigger than they ever imagined, yet the process can also be exhilarating. Perhaps the most difficult issue the search committee will have to face is the fact that no candidate will fill every individual's needs and expectations of a rabbi. No candidate can be perfect. Each candidate will have his/her own strengths and unique qualities. The committee will have to weigh the differences and learn to have realistic expectations.

Most committees are surprised by how long and complex a task this is. One committee reported, "It took longer and was more difficult than we expected." One former search committee member said, "It took so much energy; I never knew how demanding it would be." The process

takes longer than any one expects. Be patient. Congregations do find rabbis, but the trip can be more like a winding country path than a newly paved superhighway. Be confident. Even the smallest congregations have a 90% success rate of finding a rabbi in one placement season. Rabbis are just as eager to reach the conclusion. They also want decisions to be reached promptly. The process works best when you make decisions about candidates as soon as possible. Anything that you can do to expedite the process, as long as the process is respected, benefits both candidates and congregants. The committee should expect to find a rabbi and will succeed. The committee should expect to make a decision by the *Pesach* holiday.

Synagogues expect to be “buying”. The congregation is acquiring a new rabbi. However, it is critical to also expect to be “selling.” Many congregations realize too late that it is a two way process. This trap is so common it has a name; the “Harvard Syndrome.” In the 1980’s Harvard University was advertising for new junior faculty in several departments. It offered the usual; low pay, no job security and no university housing, plus the prestige and honor of being able to say ‘Harvard faculty.’ And all of a sudden it did not work. Harvard University did some homework and discovered that most of the tenure-track faculty who rejected them took positions at Stanford. Stanford offered more pay for tenure-track positions and built new housing on campus especially for junior faculty. For these faculty candidates, care for the applicant won out over pride of the institution. Congregations, as well as universities, have to realize that candidates have choices. The rabbinic candidates need to know the advantages of moving into your community and becoming part of your synagogue. So, for a search to be successful, a congregation needs to know it is also marketing itself.

Synagogues expect the candidate to have all the positive traits of their former rabbi and none of her flaws. Congregations expect their candidates to be a perfect fit for their situation. We are reminded of the humorous description of the perfect rabbi: “He should relate well to young people, be under 30 years of age and have 25 years of experience. She should be an effective leader, but let the lay people run the congregation. And have a degree in electronics. He must know how to turn the congregation on.” Many congregations expect way more than is possibly realistic. And so they ask, where are all the good candidates? At the same time, institutional loyalty and pride prevent the congregation from seeing itself accurately and honestly. The experience of the JPC is when the search takes an excessively long time or is stretched over two placement seasons it is not because of a dearth of qualified candidates but because the congregation’s expectations of rabbinic candidates is unrealistic. For the search to be successful, the congregation needs to align its assessment of the candidates with a realistic appraisal of the kind of candidate the synagogue can actually attract.

Synagogues often expect candidates to have the skills and experience of someone who has led them for 20 years. The synagogue assumes a new rabbi will have the qualifications and experience of the departing rabbi. On the other hand, rabbis are looking to move up the ladder. This trap is so common in the search world it is called the “University President” syndrome. Small universities looking for a college president will only interview someone who has already been a college president and will rule out a dean or a provost, as if the only possible candidate for a college president is someone who has already been a college president! Institutions expect the candidate to “marry down” and the candidates are looking to “marry up.” For the rabbinic search to be successful, your congregation needs to appreciate that the majority of candidates for your position will be coming from a synagogue smaller than yours and will want to grow into the

larger position.

There are two other myths: Congregations expect the search to take a year; very large congregations expect the search to take two years. Our experience is that the properly prepared congregation with accurate self-perceptions and a healthy process will conduct a search in six months or less. The search beginning in December or January should conclude before Passover in the spring. When searches do take two seasons we find it is because the expectations of the congregation were way of line with reality. For example, a large congregation of 900 families took two years to find a rabbi. The first year it had 15 candidates and according to the search committee none even qualified as a finalist for a *Shabbat* visit. The congregation wanted a “charismatic leader, near Messianic in his talents who was also inexpensive.” All fifteen candidates found pulpits with other congregations. The second year, with a more honest self-perception and a more realistic appraisal of candidates, the congregation was one of the first to make an offer to a candidate. What was different the second year? The congregation again received 15 candidates, but the expectations were much more in line with reality.

Congregations often assume they are experts in their search for a rabbi. This attitude of wanting to go it alone can be a congregation’s biggest error. A search for a rabbi is unlike anything else in the Conservative Movement. The JPC employs two full-time professionals who look after the process on a daily basis, who between them have more than 50 years experience with rabbinic searches. In addition, the USCJ *kehillah* manager is willing to visit your congregation to consult and be supportive. There is no need to feel alone in the search process.

Congregations expect to be speaking with a candidate. In fact, the congregation is dealing with a rabbinic family. At the same time that you are providing information to the candidate, please take a few moments to consider the needs of the candidate’s partner and family. Since in most instances the rabbi will be relocating to a new community, the partner will have concerns that need to be addressed and questions that need to be answered to fit into the new community. In most instances, the partner will seek work and continue employment in his or her chosen career. Congregations are wise to anticipate this need and provide informational interviews, possible contacts and necessary support for the partner. In order for the search to be a success, the search committee cannot underestimate the needs of partners, because partners are integral to the rabbi’s decision-making and ultimate success. There is a fine line between asking questions to interview the partner and asking questions and seeking information in order to be supportive. We appreciate the dilemma and the need for good judgment. A question about family planning (when do you expect to have your next child?) is out-of-bounds and inappropriate. Once you are seriously interested in a candidate, meeting the needs of the partner will convince the candidates that your congregation is a good match for the rabbi.

Rabbis with school age children will worry about their children’s Jewish education. Jewish high school education is a paramount concern. Similarly, if there is no day school or day high school, this situation can impinge upon the attractiveness of the community to the candidate. The small community with no day school should readjust its perception of its ideal candidate and change its expectation of how many candidates will apply. Experience suggests that these communities attract older rabbis whose children are past high school age, or rabbis without children.

Rabbis with young children moving into communities with a day school sometimes find that the local Jewish day school has already closed off registration for the next school year. A

rabbi may find that his or her children are put on a waiting list at the local Solomon Schechter Day School. After negotiating with a rabbi and an agreement finally is reached, the congregation may find that the rabbi may not be willing to come because there is no appropriate schooling for his or her children. Be aware that there is a shortage of classroom space in some schools. **When a rabbi first interviews with a congregation, the congregation should reserve a space for the rabbi's child (or children) immediately with the local Jewish day school, or in advance make certain the day school will make a place for a rabbi's children.**

Communication

The Information Packet

We urge the committee to prepare a packet of information for rabbis who you will interview. It should include a synagogue history, a copy of a local Jewish newspaper, several issues of the synagogue bulletin, descriptions of your unique programs, a copy of the synagogue budget, pamphlets about Jewish resources in the community and information about the local Jewish day school. In addition, it should contain a written description of the synagogue's process and timeline for selecting a rabbi. Material from the local Chamber of Commerce is also helpful. Congregations are advised to send this in advance of the interview so that a candidate will be able to ask informed questions at the interview and when visiting the congregation. This packet gives you the ability to present the full range of opportunities in your area and places the congregation in the context of the larger community.

Communication with the Rabbi

Candidates feel anxious about the search for a new position. It is a trying experience and a vulnerable time for them and their families. The most difficult part of the process for the candidates, however, is receiving no news at all about a congregation's search. It is most important to be in ongoing contact with your rabbinic candidates. Many congregations do not regularly communicate with their candidates, causing rabbis needless anxiety. You will be making decisions whether to pursue a particular candidate or not on a regular basis and you should communicate the outcome of each set of decisions to each of the candidates, the JPC and the USCJ *kehillah* manager as soon as possible. The placement director or a member of his staff will be in touch with your congregation directly to ask for an update.

Experience indicates that committees swing between activity and inactivity. There are periods of exuberance and of ponderous introspection. Progress and communication slow down when committees are sorting out issues and making decisions. Be aware that these mood swings and introspective periods will inevitably occur and that the search committee is still responsible to make every effort to continue to communicate with each rabbi. During these introspective periods we suggest sending out a simple note stating, "Our committee is now reviewing all candidate referrals before we move to the next step in the process. We will be inviting three rabbis to the congregation for *Shabbat* during the month of April. We will be in touch with you again in two or three weeks with our decision. We enjoyed meeting you."

A congregation does itself a major disservice when it develops a reputation for not being

in touch with candidates, because the candidates interpret the silence as “a synagogue that does not care” or “the committee has moved on to consider other people,” when neither assumption may be true. It is ironic that sometimes candidates find out more from a synagogue web site than they do from direct communication from the search committee.

As a matter of efficiency, we recommend that the burden of corresponding with candidates not be the responsibility of the chairperson, who has enough to do without this added task. The search committee should have a corresponding secretary, or perhaps a group of two or three members with the mandate of corresponding with candidates on a regular basis. We recommend that all communications be straightforward and sent at regular intervals. Even when a candidate is informed that he or she is no longer under consideration, the tone of your communication should reflect the quality and concerns of your congregation and its election process (see **Appendix D for letter of the rabbi**). Candidates who are still under consideration should also be kept regularly informed. Since a search usually takes several months, it is advisable to be in touch with the candidates on a monthly basis. Let the candidate know when he or she can expect to hear from you again. At the conclusion of any interview, the final statement should be, “We enjoyed meeting you, we will be back in touch...STATE WHEN... Thank you for your participation.” (Be sure to honor this deadline.) Viable candidates need to know of their status in a timely fashion to guide them in any discussions they may be having with other congregations. We advise rabbis to be in touch with congregations on a regular basis as well. If a candidate is no longer interested in a congregation, he or she should inform the congregation in writing.

Some congregations hesitate to be in touch with a rabbi because they haven't made a final decision yet. However, it is a small Jewish world and often a rabbi will find out through his or her contacts in the community. This form of communication leaves a residue of bad feelings and hurts a congregation's reputation. For example, a congregation may be conducting telephone interviews with six rabbis, one of whom is in Israel for two weeks. This stage could take five weeks instead of the projected two weeks originally communicated to the candidates. There is no need to wait for the final call to be in touch with the first five rabbis about their status with the congregation, even if you just say, “We are still completing the first round of contacts and now anticipate getting back to you in a month.” The more you reach out to all the rabbis involved in the current stage of your search, the happier they will be, and the more positive your reputation will grow. The JPC suggests to rabbis that they conclude each interview with these two questions, “When can I expect to hear from you again? If I do not hear from you at that time, will it be alright if I call you to inquire about my status?”

Communication with the Congregation

The search committee is also responsible for communicating regularly with the congregation. A sub-committee of the larger search committee should be in charge of this task. We suggest that communication be regular, using a multi-media approach. The congregational bulletin, pulpit announcements and special letters, when appropriate, will keep the entire congregation informed. Most congregations now post this information on the congregation's website. Some congregations have created a regular monthly column that appears in the synagogue bulletin and the synagogue website. The process of searching for a rabbi is important

to all members of the congregation. Keeping the congregation informed in a timely fashion will help build confidence in the process and reduce anxiety. You will need to keep the rest of the congregation in the loop, so the committee can make informed decisions. Please remember that some of the material you received must remain confidential. The nature of the process is public, but names of candidates should be kept confidential. For example, it might be appropriate to announce in the bulletin that seven rabbis have been called for interviews without mentioning their names and the dates of their interviews. It is an error to post a candidate's resume on the congregational website without the explicit permission of the rabbi. Some congregations appoint one member of the rabbinic search committee to be a contact for congregants to call if they have suggestions or issues they wish to present to the committee.

Communication with the JPC

Another responsibility of the committee is regular communication with the JPC through the director who serves as its representative. You should send him regular reports on the status of all prospective candidates. He can be most helpful to you when he knows the status of your search, so he can encourage more candidates to apply or tell candidates who are considering your community to "hang in there" because a decision has not yet been made. There are many resources available to the congregation; you do not have to reinvent the wheel. Many of the most common mistakes made by search committee can be avoided by consultation with JPC. Your congregation has searched for a rabbi perhaps twice in 30 years while the JPC oversees 80-100 searches every year. In particular, the placement director can help you understand "rabbinic culture" to increase your chances for a successful search.

Writing Sample / Video-Audio Taping

Many search committees ask if it is appropriate to request a writing sample from a candidate. It is appropriate since rabbis are called upon to communicate both orally and in writing. Previously written material may be requested, but it is not appropriate for your committee to ask for anything to be written specifically for it.

The JPC does not suggest the use of photographs or videotapes. These devices do not convey a full portrayal of the candidates. Audio-taping of an interview for purposes of later recollection upsets candidates and can throw them off distorting their interview. A secretary should take detailed written notes for later review by members of the committee who have missed the meeting or if there is a dispute as to what a candidate said. It is also inappropriate to ask for an audiotape of a class, lecture or sermon, because rabbis do not have the technical facilities to produce these materials in a professional manner. Rather, it is important to ask a rabbi for references. Better yet, if you want to evaluate a rabbi's teaching ability, ask candidates to teach when they come for an interview. Congregations should understand that videotaping or recording a rabbinic interview is inappropriate, distracting, and not acceptable.

Question of Remuneration

In the congregational questionnaire, some congregations might prefer to leave the financial questions blank or decide to write "negotiable." This is neither wise nor helpful. We

understand that congregations wish the widest latitude in financial matters, but candidates need to know a compensation range to determine whether it is appropriate to apply. Therefore, if you leave this question blank or write “negotiable” the questionnaire will not be processed. The JPC requires that you supply either a specific compensation number or a range, e.g. “minimum compensation is \$150,000,” “a compensation not to exceed \$150,000,” “a salary range of \$150,000 to \$200,000 depending upon the experience of the candidate.” Congregations should be aware that when the compensation is not competitive, rabbinic candidates generally decline to apply. Sometimes the chair of the search committee will say to us, “if the right candidate applies we will find additional resources to increase the compensation.” While this statement may be true, our experience is that it does not help attract additional candidates to your congregation. Both candidate and congregation should consider your written figure to be a “ballpark” figure for compensation. Once the position is offered; there will be further negotiations about both salary and benefits. These numbers are always negotiable between you and the rabbi.

Decision-Making: Differentiating Between Candidates

After each interview, the committee should take the time to discuss the candidate. Keep complete records of your conversations. Your committee should take extensive notes. Some congregations find it helpful to evaluate each candidate in your three or four areas of priority and then to make a comparison between candidates. The categories might include teaching, pastoral care, and experience with children. (See **Appendix J**) You can evaluate the candidates in each role and then discuss them in relationship to each other. It is important that the comparison be realistic, a comparison of the candidates with each other and not to some fictional hypothetical “perfect” rabbi that does not exist. The committee should reach an agreement “ranking” candidates in order of preference. Then you can make a decision promptly.

It is now time for the final decision. During these many weeks, the task of the board and the congregation has been to provide feedback to the committee, specify congregational challenges that need to be met and detail the scope and priorities of the rabbinic position. The task of the search committee now is to make the final decision. Sometimes, searches are either overly participative, with too many decision-makers, or overly closed, with little outside input allowed. Some congregations ask a search committee to recommend two or three candidates to the board for the final decision. This is a classic mistake. First, it greatly lengthens the time of decision-making. Second, it forces the board to repeat the work of the committee and undermines the process. The design of the ideal search process should be a well-conceived mix of solid preparation, wide consultation and focused decision-making by the search committee. The search committee should have the authority to recommend one final candidate to the board and the congregation. Although two or three candidates might come for a *Shabbat*, the committee must make a decision, naming only one candidate for the position.

Let us say a word about rejection. Please remember that both rabbis and congregations are looking at several options in search of the right match. After your congregation’s lengthy search process, you make an offer to a rabbi, and then you may find that your first choice candidate rejects your offer. Please understand that rejection does happen from time to time to both rabbis and congregations. If your chosen rabbi rejects your offer, please take a deep breath and move on. The committee will need some time to grieve and experience disappointment, but

then it needs to reenergize and complete its task of choosing its religious leader.

Offering a position to a rabbi is separate from negotiating financial terms. Negotiations of compensation, benefits and other matters take place after you make an offer. Once you made an offer and your candidate has accepted both the congregation and rabbi must stop interviewing further. Only if both you and your candidate agree can you continue to interview candidates. The operating principle of the JPC is **TRANSPARENCY**.

Both the congregation and the candidate should be in touch with the JPC as soon as you have made an offer has been made, to keep the office updated to ensure no more rabbis send their resumes to your search committee. When an offer has been made but an agreement not yet signed, the congregation will be posted on the placement list as a congregation that is no longer accepting resumes: it is considered "in discussion". Therefore, it is imperative that a congregation and a rabbi should come to terms as quickly as possible.

Length of Process

How long should it take to find a new rabbi? We can only suggest parameters. While there are no absolute patterns, everyone agrees that shorter is better than longer. Most congregations and rabbis conduct their employment search decisions six months to a year before the end of a rabbinic contract. As a result, most rabbis and congregations begin their search in late winter, so looking for a rabbi most often begins in December, January or February. However, it is not uncommon for a congregation to begin the search in March or April because of the time frame involved in the decision-making process between the incumbent rabbi and the congregation. On the other hand, sometimes in congregations where the rabbi is retiring or a decision is reached particularly early, a congregation may be listed in September or October. But even with an early listing, the active placement season is still from January to April. Most congregations post their openings with the JPC in January or February. Even if congregations start late in the "Placement Season" they can be helped in finding a rabbi through active consultation with the JPC. The goal is for the shortest search period possible, within one placement period. The goal of most congregations is to complete the process by Passover.

PART IV: INTERVIEWING THE RABBI

הַיִּצָּר יַחַד לְבָרִים; הַמְּכִין, אֵל-כָּל-מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם.
He that fashions the hearts of them all, that discerns all their doings. (Pslam 33:15)

Review of Resumes

When you have completed all preliminary work; after there is a consensus about the congregation's priorities; after you have returned a complete questionnaire return; after your committee has prepared its questions and its profile for its new rabbi; after the packet of information for candidates is prepared, your congregation is ready to review resumes. You will receive resumes as soon as your eplacement account is approved. They will be forwarded via email to the person you designated to receive them. They will come as an attachment to a formal email announcement. The next step is for your search committee to review all the resumes that you have received. Remember, a resume presents a general outline of a candidate. You can only discover detailed information in an interview. You should send a letter of acknowledgement to each rabbi whose resume you receive. When you acknowledge the receipt of a resume promptly, you set a positive tone for future communication and build good will. The letter should include a description of your planned procedure. This is a professional responsibility of your congregation.

A search committee is not obligated to interview all candidates who have submitted resumes. You have already established clear preliminary grounds for elimination or acceptance. A resume serves as a vehicle to determine whom your committee wishes to interview. Most congregations grant a phone interview to all applicants. When you complete this initial screening it is necessary to inform all the candidates whether or not they will be given further consideration. It is your reasonability to communicate with the candidates about their status. Within two weeks of receiving a resume, you should be able to decide whether or not to move forward with that candidate.

Preliminary or Screening Interview/Stage 1

-15 minutes per candidate

In the new economy, you will receive more resumes than in your previous searches. You might even receive an overwhelming number- thirty to forty candidates for a geographically and demographically desirable position. Do not panic! We encourage your search committee to have fifteen minute screening interviews by phone with all candidates rather than eliminate candidates randomly and without serious consideration. You should not feel the need to have an hour long conversation with every candidate at this stage. The goal of this brief screening call is to both connect with the candidate and to eliminate those who are clearly outside the parameters of your congregation's priorities.

We recommend that you ask the following four questions in this first stage interview.

- In five minutes or less, tell us about yourself. (Candidates elevator speech).

- What is it about our congregation 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 questions do you have of us?

The Telephone Interview/ Stage 2

-1 hour per candidate

In recent years, telephone interviews have become more commonplace as travel expenses have increased. A telephone interview is an initial way of determining whether a candidate should be invited to your community for a personal interview, but it is second best to a direct, personal interview. You do not meet a candidate fully in a telephone interview. You should set up telephone interviews in advance. No candidate appreciates an unannounced telephone call with eight people on the other end ready to ask questions that will affect his or her future. Most congregations conduct brief telephone interviews with all candidates who have forwarded a resume. The JPC has prepared a suggested list of starter questions for you culled from the experiences of past searches. (See **Appendix E**)

You should structure the telephone interview. Though six to eight people may be on the line, only one or two should ask questions, which you should prepare in advance. A telephone interview is an opportunity to determine if the candidate's general background and experience match your congregation's major priorities. The goal of this interview is to determine first, whether you connect with the candidate and second, if this person's strengths mesh with your priorities to merit an in-person interview. Good questions include open-ended queries, for example, "Tell us why you became a rabbi?" "Describe the process by which you would make a religious decision for the community. Give an example from your previous congregation. How did you work with lay leadership to make a religious decision?" "After reading our congregational questionnaire, what do you feel is our three most important priorities?"

A telephone interview should be limited in length. A maximum of an hour is suggested. It is not an appropriate time to discuss finances. The candidates should be allowed some time to ask questions about the congregation.

The process of telephone interviews may take many weeks or even months. The search committee has a sacred obligation to let all the candidates know where they stand at regular intervals. We suggest every two or three weeks. One trap congregations fall into is to wait until all calls are completed before they let even one rabbi know the committee's decision about that rabbi, though the decision may have been made six weeks earlier. When your committee has met and made some interim decisions, make it a regular habit to inform the candidates and the JPC of your decisions. Candidates are also asked to be in touch with you.

The Skype Interview/Stage 2

-1 hour per candidate

Skype is a new form of communication often used in businesses. Recently, congregations have started using it. In many instances, it takes the place of the regular telephone interview.

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.

Second, the committee should practice with Skype. The technology is new and many on the committee may be using it for the first time. You want the search committee to look professional and competent.

Third, the search committee should prepare their computer for the Skype interview. 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. Test your web cam, speakers, and microphone as well.

If you plan on doing a lot of Skype interviews, it is worth investing in a new web cam. Many older and budget notebooks have bare bones webcams that do not deliver a very good picture. Pick up a high quality HD webcam. The better picture will give you a clearer picture of the candidates. (See **Appendix F** from more tips for the Skype website.)

The Personal Interview: Preparation of Interview Questions/Stage 3

-2 hours per candidate

Congratulations! You have finished your phone and Skype interviews and now you are now ready to move forward with the in-person interviews. Interviewing a rabbi is a serious matter which demands effort and thoughtful consideration. It should not be spontaneous. The best interviews are those for which questions have been prepared in advance. The best searches are those that ask the same set of basic questions to all the candidates. Though congregations are different, there are some basic questions important to all congregations. At this third stage interview, the goal is to determine the candidate with the best qualifications, personality and vision to serve your specific congregation at this specific time. The JPC has found from experience that the best way to do this is by using questions based on the Role of the Rabbi. (See **Appendix G** for a list of suggested third stage questions and **Appendix J** for Role of the Rabbi).

However, each congregation is unique and should ask additional questions based on its particular situation. The search committee should also be aware that certain questions are inappropriate to ask, and that others are not allowed by law. As a general matter, it is unprofessional and unethical to ask candidates their age, their marital status, their plans for having children or about handicaps or disabilities. Congregations are wise to respect professional boundaries no matter how curious they are. We ask that congregations be sensitive and appropriate about these matters. The JPC's professionals are available to consult with search committees about the appropriateness of any line of questioning.

We are often asked when should the committee begin on-site interviews? Since it is a process of rolling referrals, the search committee should begin personal interviews at their first opportunity. Inevitably, the committee is conducting telephone interviews and on-site interviews simultaneously. If after a telephone interview, the committee feels a sense of chemistry and connection to the candidate, it is time to schedule a personal interview.

The keys to a successful interview are organization and sensitivity. The rabbi should be comfortable with arrangements for food and housing. Ideally, an interview should not last more than two or three hours. The entire committee should be present for the interview. Committee members who cannot be present should be made aware of the candidate's qualities at a later time.

It is not appropriate to tape the interview for distribution later because it interferes with the spontaneity of the moment. It is appropriate, if you wish, to ask that the rabbi begin the personal interview with a short *d'var* torah in advance. This interview is not the time to ask a rabbi about his or her current compensation and benefits. It is important for a search committee to remember that a good interview is really like a good conversation. There should be give-and-take, questions from both the candidate and the congregation. It is just as important to allow the rabbi an opportunity to interview you as it is for you to gather information about a candidate. At the conclusion of the interview, you may wish to ask the candidate for a list of references. The chair of the committee should inform the candidate about the next step in the process and when the rabbi can expect to hear from the committee again. It is considerate to write each candidate you interview to thank the rabbis for their time and presence. The congregation is responsible for reimbursing the candidate for all travel and related expenses in a timely fashion.

After the candidate leaves, the search committee should take time to digest and review the interview and discuss the candidate. The committee may want additional information. It is appropriate to call back a rabbi to respond to specific questions that may have been raised by the interview or to clarify his or her answers. Since interviews of several candidates may take place over many weeks, and congregations and candidates are both balancing several options, it is helpful to the candidates if you inform them of your progress every two or three weeks at this crucial stage. Similar to the procedure of working with telephone interviews, a congregation should not wait until all the personal interviews have been completed to be in touch with the candidates.

Interviewing traps

Disarming Bad News

You should expect that rabbis will do their own research into the congregation's history. They will often talk to previous rabbis, talk with the RA and do their own internet searches. Search committees should be prepared for candidates to be aware of contradictions, perceived slights with the previous rabbi and problems in the community at large. Having a checkered past is generally not enough to prevent candidates from applying, but how congregations reveal this information will influence the candidate's perception. "The cover-up may be worse than the crime." The JPC recommends that the congregations be straightforward in letting the candidates know about any complicated situation and what the congregation is doing about it.

Inappropriate question

Sometimes, members of a search committee are compelled to ask what they know are inappropriate questions. "Do you plan on having kids?" "Do you plan on getting married?" "Do you plan on having a family?" Congregations may feel the need to ask these questions and most candidates prepare answers, but congregations should know these questions are inappropriate. If a search committee does ask these types of questions, it telegraphs a message to the candidate and often influences their decision about future place of

employment. JPC strongly recommends that despite the temptation and perceived benefits to these questions, you hold back in asking them.

Missed Question/Missed Opportunity

Most congregations are diligent about preparing questions in advance. Congregations are anxious and often feel the need to ask as many questions as they possibly can. It is common for your search committee to feel rushed at the interview. As a result, committees often do not leave enough time for the candidate to ask their questions. Sometimes, the search committee feels the need to repeat a question or go over a question it feels it omitted. It is the experience of the JPC that the search committee usually asks more than enough questions and time is better spent giving the candidate space for their questions. Good questions by the candidate are often just as important to understanding the candidate than their answers to your questions.

Talking About Money

There is a temptation at the interview, especially by representatives of the finance committee, to pop the salary question in an early part of the interview process. Sometimes it is phrased as "[You have seen what is offered in the congregational questionnaire, is that acceptable?](#)" In the synagogue world, the usual practice is first for you and a candidate agree to a match and then to negotiate. It is always better to push off the discussion about financial details to a later point in the process.

Checking References

Checking references is a delicate matter. Experience has shown that a rabbi's relationship with his or her congregation can be adversely affected when inquiries are made by other congregations. Usually, a rabbi will inform the officers of the current congregation that he or she is looking at new pulpits. Most often, the rabbinic search is a public affair. However, sometimes the rabbi will not inform the entire congregation and the rabbinic interview will be a private affair. It really depends on circumstances, history and relationships. What makes the exploration difficult is that if a rabbi wishes not to upset a good relationship with his/her present congregation, but also needs to explore possibilities for the future. When a rabbi's congregation learns he or she is looking, even when they are admirers, or acknowledge that the time is right, the congregation will still be upset. Notification to a congregation puts the rabbi in a difficult situation at best and at worse starts a course of action that may require the rabbi to depart even though he or she was only considering other alternatives. The JPC always suggests to rabbis to be in direct communication with their synagogue leadership when they consider changing pulpits. Similarly, the JPC asks search committees to be sensitive and maintain confidentiality when checking references on a candidate and to consider the needs of the candidate before doing so.

A congregational search committee should contact references presented by the rabbi first. You may wish to contact people whom the rabbi has not suggested. It is important for the rabbi to know that you are doing so. Please be careful not to call anyone in the rabbi's present congregation without securing permission from the rabbi. Checking references too early may not

be helpful to a congregation's search process. The best way to check out a candidate is not to ask broad or comprehensive questions, "Tell me about Rabbi X." Responses may be too general to be helpful. People respond more helpfully to specific questions. For example, "We met with Rabbi Y last week. It was clear to us that she spent a good deal of time with the Hebrew school. Can you tell me more about her work with Hebrew school classes?" Interacting with the rabbi before speaking to references will help you formulate helpful questions. Use the referral check to fill in gaps of information. It is our considered opinion, based upon the feedback we receive from congregations, that it is best to check out candidates' references after a face-to-face interview. Again, reference checking is the responsibility of the congregation.

Let us share with you a word about hearing negative feedback about a candidate. No one person's comments should be determinative. There is something negative to say about everyone, especially about a rabbi whose leaving evokes powerful emotions from the congregation (see section on Transition). What will be most helpful in evaluating referrals is to seek a pattern which emerges about a rabbi. The committee should keep checking references until the portrait is consistent. The right question to a reference will elicit what you need to find out. Remember, that it is your responsibility to interview a candidate as completely and as thoroughly as possible.

Congregational Visit

Visiting a Rabbi's Congregation

Although a site visit to the rabbi's current congregation is not necessary, some congregations find it helpful when weighing the choice between finalists. It is sometimes the most helpful indicator of a rabbi's suitability for a congregation. It can be very valuable to visit a rabbi on his or her home site to see what the rabbi has built and under what circumstances. If your committee feels strongly about visiting the rabbi's congregation, please understand that the presence of your committee will certainly be noticed and may adversely affect the rabbi and his or her relationship with his or her congregation. An unannounced visit is a violation of rabbi-congregational ethics. The rabbi may ask you not to visit, or ask you to come at a time when your presence will be less noticed. On the other hand, the candidate may encourage you to visit any time. All visits should be arranged with the consent of the candidate.

Meeting with the Entire Congregation

Frequently, the final stage in your election process will be a *Shabbat* experience, with the candidate and partner invited to spend a weekend with your congregation. Two or three finalists are appropriate for face-to-face meetings with the entire congregation. Your congregation will have a difficult time choosing among more than three. The characteristics and strengths of the finalists should match the needs and interests of the congregation. If there is only one candidate, your congregation might feel it was denied participation in the selection process. Ultimately, your search committee will recommend only one candidate to the board to be the new rabbi. Congregational input is a key factor in that recommendation

Some candidates or congregations may prefer a weekday visit for this final stage. Weekend or weekday, it is important to be consistent with all candidates. It is an unfair comparison otherwise. 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 the

rabbi, and the rabbi can get a sense of the religious orientation of the congregation. While the candidate is in the community, the search committee should provide the partner with resource people for information on housing and cultural life. When appropriate, moreover, this may include people who can advise the partner on employment opportunities and on the quality of the various schools in the area which the rabbi's children might attend. Congregations should be aware that some partners are themselves rabbis, cantors, Jewish educators, and Jewish communal workers who will be seeking employment in the Jewish community.

How should you structure this *Shabbat* experience? Your search committee will probably invite the rabbi and partner to an informal Friday night dinner at a congregant's home. Some members of the search committee will probably attend. You should invite the prospective rabbi to lead the Friday night service and preach. At the *Oneg Shabbat* following services, give the rabbi a chance to interact with congregants. On *Shabbat* morning the rabbi should again lead the service and preach at the regularly scheduled *Shabbat* morning minyan. At a *kiddush* following services, the rabbi should have an opportunity to meet congregants. **The congregation and the search committee should allow the rabbi and partner time to relax over lunch which should NOT be another time for another set of questions directed to the rabbi.** You may want to give the rabbi the opportunity to *daven* or read *Torah*, which should be arranged beforehand. At some point during the weekend, the congregation will probably want to ask the rabbi to teach. There should be no surprises for the guest rabbi. All expectations such as leading services, teaching classes, giving *d'vrai Torah* should be worked out and scheduled in advance. It is probably in the congregation's best interest to conclude the candidate's presentation in the early afternoon because by this point presentations tend to seem repetitious to both the candidate and the congregation.

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 her 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 JPC considers to be the optimal time for the sessions to last. Unscreened questions from the floor should be 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.

Congregations often ask about the role of the current rabbi when a guest rabbi comes for *Shabbat*. It is an expected rabbinic courtesy for the guest rabbi to inform the current rabbi that he or she is 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 the candidate to display his or her talents and abilities. The incumbent may wish to excuse himself from the regular weekend responsibilities to make the candidate 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. 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.

Personal visits by rabbis to the congregation may occur over a long period of time. When all of the personal interviews have been completed, and before finalists arrive for the *Shabbat* visit, the search committee's task is to let all the candidates know where they stand. Congregations sometimes think that since they have not made a final decision, they may hold off notifying those who are not finalists. It is imperative at this juncture that the corresponding secretary be in touch with every candidate. A short note could go along these lines:

“Thank you for your interest in our Congregation. We have now asked three rabbis to spend a *Shabbat* with us. We hope that one of them will become our next rabbi. We enjoyed meeting you and wish you good future success.”

Since congregations and candidates are both balancing several options, it is helpful to the “system” and to sister congregations to inform rabbis of their progress as soon as possible at this crucial stage.

Travel Arrangements and Reimbursement

It is usual for congregations to ask candidates to visit for an extended *Shabbat* and to cover the rabbi's travel and hotel expenses. Please be aware that the rabbi will have special concerns for his or her own personal religious observance while on the *Shabbat* visit. Candidates are not expected to travel on *Shabbat* and you should make arrangements accordingly. Additionally, candidates require kosher meals, which you should arrange. It is proper to invite a candidate's partner to accompany the candidate on a congregational visit, since he or she will be involved in making the final decision. A rabbi cannot make such an important decision without the input and agreement of their partner. However, the partner is not to be interviewed like a candidate. If you have the wisdom to extend this invitation, then the congregation is responsible for the travel and hotel expenses of the candidate and their partner.

For some candidates with older children, being away over a weekend will not be a problem. Some rabbis with young families, however, might prefer to come without partners or children. Arrangements should then be made for the partner to come at a different time to get a sense of the community and the congregation. If rabbi and partner 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.

One of the most stressful elements of the search for the rabbi may be when the rabbi needs to be away from his or her own congregation, especially over a *Shabbat*. Obviously, coverage may be an issue. The RA and the USCJ have agreed that congregations should expect that their departing rabbi will spend some *Shabbatot* away at interviews. This is a normal part of the 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.

What happens if the rabbi has to cancel a visit that your congregation has already paid for? As travel costs have increased, the JPC sees this question more often than previously. In the business world, such an expenditure would be considered a 'cost of doing business' to the

employer. You may have planned for a rabbi's visit many weeks in advance and then prior to the scheduled visit the rabbi may receive a job offer or you may make a decision before the other candidates have an opportunity to visit. Both possibilities do occur and although such events happen, the other party will feel upset or angry. The suggestion of the JPC is transparency. For example, the candidate should call the search committee and ask if the *Shabbat* visit should proceed as scheduled with the knowledge that the rabbi is considering an offer from another congregation. It is an awkward situation and some congregations move forward and others do not. If the rabbi cancels an interview is the JPC suggests that the candidate reimburse the congregation for 50% of travel expenses. If the congregation cancels, it is a cost of 'doing business.' If you find the right candidate it is acceptable to stop the process. Better to end the process than go through the formalities of interviewing people you will not hire. If a rabbi finds a congregation, they should not be castigated for their decision as well.

Small Congregations, Assistantships & Graduating Seniors/Interview

Week

The placement process for all senior rabbinical students is directed by the JPC. The JPC is the only body in the Conservative Movement permitted to forward a student's resume to a congregation. In addition to all the services already mentioned, for those in their final year of school there is one more program we offer you. The JPC coordinates and organizes a centralized "interview week" that enables congregations to meet with all interested members of the senior classes of both JTS and the Ziegler School. Interview slots are available to all the congregations who have registered with the JPC (and are on the Placement List).

The JPC invites congregations of less than 250 families (those in our "A" category) seeking rabbis, and large congregations seeking assistants, to come to the New York to interview seniors. We have expanded this program to include JCCs, schools, camps, chaplaincies, and Hillels. Interviews are held at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City, which is also the office of the JPC. Interview Week is held every year at the same time- late February: Monday to Thursday. Rabbi Schoenberg, our Placement Director and the deans of the Rabbinical Schools are available for lunch and conversation on each of these days. The JPC hosts a hospitality suite for the participants. In advance of your visit, you will receive the candidates' resumes and a room assignment. In fairness to your congregation or organization, and in fairness to the members of the class, search committees are expected to interview all candidates who sign up.

You will want to ensure that the positions you seek to fill are presented as accurately as possible. You should carefully choose the members of the search committee who are to represent the congregation at Interview Week. Your representatives should know of the needs of the congregation, have a strong commitment to the congregation, and the time they have available for their mission. In the case of an assistantship, the senior rabbi should be prepared to travel to New York for interviews with interested members of the class. Often, a layperson or a small committee has accompanied the senior rabbi. It is always advisable that at least two members of the search committee come to meet with senior students. However, if the committee delegation is too large, the 45-minute interview slot may become less productive. The wise committee sets a limit on the number of people who travel to New York.

In preparation for its interviews, the search committee is asked to bring its interview

packet describing the general community, the Jewish community, and the congregation itself, including a sampling of bulletins, brochures, journals, and information on housing, schools, cultural facilities and the like.

Please make a particular effort to make extensive preparation in order to put your best foot forward. First impressions count! You will make a better impression if you are well organized with questions to ask and materials to share. We appreciate that seeing many candidates in one day for only 45 minutes in addition to be exhilarating is also exhausting and difficult. Congregations tell us that coming to interview week is a joyful experience and are thrilled to see how bright is the future of the Conservative Movement. (See **Appendix E and Appendix G** for a list of suggested questions.)

Graduating students, both from JTS and the Ziegler School are informed of all congregational openings via the RA website in real time. We also set up an e-mail link with all the seniors to keep them updated. It is best to sign up for Interview Week by the first week of February so the students have time to read your application and study up on your congregation. All rabbis plus the senior class are eligible for “A” congregations and assistantships but only the seniors will be present during Interview Week. Most congregations finish interviewing rabbis from the field before Interview Week and then interview the students for the four *Shabbatot* after interview week.

PART V: WHAT IF YOUR RABBINIC SEARCH IS DIFFICULT?

אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה, אָקוּט בְּדוֹר וָאֵמֶר, עִם תְּעִי לְכַב הֵם וְהֵם, לֹא-נִדְעוּ דְרָכַי.

"For forty years I was provoked by that generation, and said: It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known My ways;" (Psalm 95:10)

Most healthy congregations that start the placement process in a timely manner find their right match in a rabbi. As a general rule, rabbinic searches take a little less than six months after you receive the first resume. Occasionally, a congregation has some difficulty in attracting candidates that they find qualified. You may interview candidates who then withdraw their applications. There are several reasons why this happens. Some factors you may not be able to be change. For example if candidates decline your position because of a lack of Jewish day schools, a new Jewish day school will not be built in your community in the next six months. There are however, many issues that you can be resolve.

In our experience, there are six major issues that prevent congregations from finding their appropriate rabbi in a timely manner. They are unrealistic congregational expectations, a congregation not knowing what exactly it wants, rabbinic compensation, housing, quality of life, and finally that the congregation is in conflict with itself.

Expectation of Congregation/"We Want Everything"

The overwhelming reason that a rabbinic search stalls is because the search committee has failed to prioritize the roles of the rabbi and disseminate those priorities to the candidates. This is easy to test by going around the table and have each member of the search committee say what the synagogue's priorities are in a candidate. If the same set of the priorities are not articulated by each of the members of the search committee, you have not completed your task. If you have not done it previously, now is the time to do the role of the rabbi exercise. (See **Appendix J**)

Clarifying your top three priorities will help you in your search. Search committees must remember that the synagogue is being interviewed by the candidate. If the candidate cannot determine the priorities of the congregation the candidate will be reluctant to move forward with the process. One search committee jokingly said it wanted a leading Jewish personality to be its next rabbi and inquired of the JPC about his availability. This international figure was not interested in their position, but it was good indication that no currently serving rabbi would be good enough for them. Sometimes a congregation has to revisit its expectations and make adjustments. Then the candidates who have already applied may become viable possibilities for them.

Rabbinic Compensation

Rabbinic salaries are becoming more and more competitive; compensation is a factor that a congregation may wish to revisit. The higher the compensation, the better the candidates. An adjustment mid-search to appropriate competitive levels is often too late. There is often a dispute between the guardians of the congregation's budget and the search committee. There are two

values that are in conflict with each other: sound financial stewardship and fair compensation for the value of the position. In a baseball analogy, we can contrast the Oakland A's vs the New York Yankees in the way they do business. The A's are always looking for deal and when a player is set to earn what he feels he is actually worth, they trade him. The Yankees are willing to pay what it is necessary to attract a player to play for them and win a championship. You will want to help your congregation find a way to offer appropriate compensation.

Housing

Another issue that makes a difference that you can address is housing arrangements. How realistic are your congregation's housing arrangements? Housing is not just for the rabbi themselves, but for their family and a home is emotional issue. Every housing market is different. Rabbis expect to be able to walk to synagogue from their new home. Housing around synagogues often cost more than a rabbi's compensation would allow them to live. Rabbis and their families need adequate space and privacy to thrive. Congregations need to think creatively about ensuring their new rabbi will be able to find an appropriate home.

Quality of Life

More and more rabbis are concerned about quality of life and in particular their Jewish quality of life. Congregations can do more about having realistic expectations of a rabbi's time constraints and the rabbi's desire to spend time with their own family. An example where a congregation sometimes doesn't understand the personal life of a rabbi is the value of a day off. Secular professionals get a two day weekend, yet expect the rabbi to have just one. Often, congregants don't even respect that one day. A newly arrived rabbi negotiated Monday as his day off, so it would match his wife's schedule. In his first week the rabbi did not go to Monday morning minyan. The following day people commented to the rabbi, "Where were you? There was no one to read *Torah*?" The congregation's expectation that the rabbi read *Torah* at Monday morning minyan was in conflict with the rabbi's need for a day to de-stress. What will the congregation do to protect the boundaries of the rabbi?

Quality of Jewish life is also a concern for candidates. Candidates will have concerns about the availability of kosher food, proximity to a *mikvah*, access to a Jewish Day school and are there other Jewish children to be able to play with the rabbi's children on *Shabbat* afternoon. What can your congregation do to provide Jewish resources in a timely cost effective and user friendly way? The congregation needs to be clear about how the rabbi will be able to access the Jewish amenities that will appeal to a candidate.

Unclear Presentation

A congregation had done its work and had agreed on its three priorities. However, when the candidates asked what were they looking for in a new rabbi, rather than giving the rabbi the consensus priorities, one strong and articulate personality on the search committee hijacked the conversation and gave their own personal expectations. The chair of the committee quickly stepped in and said what the congregation was actually looking for in a rabbi. However, the candidate was left with the impression that the committee was unsure what they were looking for.

Congregation is in Conflict

A rabbi visited a congregation for *Shabbat* and Sunday morning at breakfast after morning *minyan*, the members of the search committee criticized each other. The chair of the search committee berated the president of the synagogue for never coming to morning minyan. Another member of the search committee berated the chairman for his lack of consistent attendance at the morning minyan and the rabbi grew more and more uncomfortable. This good candidate chose to take his talents to another congregation. Another congregation was divided over the departure of its most recent rabbi. There was a deep divide over the validity of the rabbi's dismissal. Although there was only one building there were now two congregations. As each candidate was interviewed if one side saw them positively, the other side automatically felt that they were not a viable candidate. Good candidates seek to avoid congregations where conflict is palpable.

If despite all efforts a congregation is not successful in finding a rabbinic leader, then, with permission of the JPC, the congregation can explore an interim rabbi, or obtaining a waiver.

Interim Rabbi

Occasionally, interim rabbis are available to serve on an ad hoc basis for one year. Being in between rabbis can be an anxious situation for a congregation; the successful interim rabbi will be a non-anxious presence who will be able to lower the anxiety. The interim can offer the searching congregation some reality testing and observations about what issues need to be addressed. An interim rabbi is a highly skilled, experienced rabbi who will function as a healer, a change agent and a transition consultant. An interim rabbi is usually a retired rabbi or one in between opportunities who is looking for a limited engagement with a congregation. Sometimes an English speaking Masorti rabbi from Israel is available to come for a year to North America. Your congregation's desire for an interim rabbi is published on the JPC list and distributed to all RA rabbis worldwide. Some special rules apply to congregations seeking an interim. An interim rabbi may not be considered for the permanent position. While the interim is in place, the congregation must continue to look for a permanent rabbi.

An interim rabbi may only be engaged with the knowledge and permission of the JPC. Every year the JPC provides at least a half dozen congregations with the services of an interim rabbi. We are often asked what the remuneration of an interim should be. Because this work is equivalent to the permanent position but only lasts a short duration, the compensation should be between 90% to 100% of what the prior rabbi was paid. Congregations need to be aware that although the JPC maintains a list of rabbis actively seeking this kind of specialized work, there are still only a limited number of individuals available to provide this service every year. When a congregation engages the services of an interim rabbi, the congregation is obligated to enable the rabbi to attend the special training provided by the JPC to interim rabbis. See **Appendix K** for a sample form to request an interim rabbi.

Waivers

A congregation is not free to consider non-RA rabbis without permission. However, in special circumstances, a congregation may request a waiver from the placement rules to interview

rabbis who are not members of the RA if it has received an insufficient number of referrals. The JPC reviews each situation on a case-by-case basis. Waivers are considered once a congregation has started the search process and has been searching for a rabbi for at least three months of an active placement season. Waivers are not automatic. A congregation begins the waiver process by making a request for a form by email to eschoenberg@rabbinicalassembly.org. Once the form has been completed and returned the JPC will review the request. Even though a waiver has been granted, the JPC will continue to refer candidates as they become available. See **Appendix L** to see a sample waiver form.

It stands to reason that the tenor, direction and momentum of a congregation follow the movement affiliation of the rabbi. It is a natural evolutionary process that if a Conservative congregation, which is a member of the USCJ, engages a non-RA rabbi, it will become conflicted. The role of the rabbi is to reach his or her congregants. Thus, after listening to the rabbi, appreciating his or her sermons and being comforted by his or her words, congregants will begin to slowly and gradually move toward that rabbi's philosophical and denominational leanings. Experience has taught us that this will cause tension when the rabbi's background and social contacts are not Conservative, because the leadership of the congregation will desire to maintain its commitment to Conservative Judaism while the rabbi has no such commitment. This conflict is inevitable over time. Engaging a non-RA rabbi will often mean the congregation is distancing itself from the institutions and personalities of Conservative Judaism. Although a congregation may obtain a waiver and be allowed to employ a non-RA rabbi, it may not in the interest of the congregation to do so.

It is the policy of the USCJ for all congregations to engage a RA rabbi for a vacant pulpit because both congregations and rabbis belong to one Conservative movement (see **Appendix D** for dealing with non-RA rabbis). Call the JPC for guidelines and advice.

PART VI: NEGOTIATING WITH THE RABBI

לְמַנּוֹת יְמֵינוּ, כִּן הוֹדַע; וְנִבְא, לְכֵב הַקְּמָה

So teach us to number our days, that we may get us a heart of wisdom. (Psalm 90:12)

Negotiations: Empowerment

What do you need to start successful negotiations? In most instances in the synagogue world, the organizational negotiators are not the same people who do the search because a special committee to handle finance negotiations takes over. First, the rabbi and congregation should determine how negotiations will be accomplished. It is probably best for the congregation to appoint a small group of two or three people to negotiate with the candidate. A single 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 intimidating to the candidate.

Second, you and your rabbi-to-be should establish time parameters. When does the process begin and by when will it be concluded? These parameters should be agreed upon up front. Concluding financial details within two weeks of an offer to become rabbi is reasonable. Third, establish where the discussions will be held and by what means. Fourth, clarify what is going to be negotiated. This is probably a discussion about compensation and benefits. Housing issues, definitions of the position and length of contract may also be on the table. Leave precise contract language to a later time and to legal professionals. The JPC strongly recommends negotiations take place in person and not over email.

By far, the most important issue to clarify is that of the authority of those negotiating with the candidate. The board should give the negotiators the authority to agree on compensation and benefits with the rabbi. Some congregations delegate this responsibility to the executive committee or other small sub-committee. It is imperative that this group be empowered by the full authority of the board, so that the terms they agree to with the rabbi will reflect the commitment of the board. It usually leads to hard feelings if the board or the rabbi unilaterally reopens the process of negotiating or changes the financial arrangements after the negotiating committee and the rabbi have reached an understanding. The wrong thing to have happen is to work out an arrangement between the rabbi and the committee with compromises and concessions by both parties, to have the chair of the committee then announce, “Now, the board has to review and approve it. I do not know what the board will do.” Then, a week later the chairman reports back to the rabbi with a different set of numbers established by the board. Instead, the rabbi will be angry and frustrated and feel the committee did not negotiate in good faith. The board should give the negotiators instructions, including parameters for the negotiations, and accept their work when it comes in within those parameters. The goal should be a negotiation that is done fairly, in a timely fashion, with clear guidelines and building good will for the joint future of rabbi and congregation. Finally, all interim and partial understandings should be put down in writing so there are no misunderstandings later by either party.

Financial Preparation

Now, let us look at the financial preparation by the congregation. We start with the financial health of the institution. Negotiations always begin with the reality of congregational life and budget. No one has ever met a non-profit institution that indicates publicly that it is doing well financially. However, there is a big difference between having a deficit every year made up by an annual fundraiser versus a vote to cut back the Hebrew school faculty by ten percent because payroll cannot be met. Consultant Lyle Schaller points out that it is normal for a congregation to carry debt just like a homeowner has a mortgage. It is a very normal way of doing religious soul business.

Second, double-check the questionnaire for the salary range the congregation has already suggested. It is unethical to ignore the stated figure or to say, "Oh, I was not part of that discussion back then," and make an offer less than in the questionnaire. Judaism stresses honesty in financial matters. Your figures in the questionnaire are a sacred commitment. Recently, a rabbi with seniority accepted a position with a range stated at \$100,000 to \$125,000. The congregation asked the candidate what he wanted and he responded, "Since I am a rabbi with a good deal of experience I would expect the top of your range." The negotiator responded, "Oh, the search committee made a mistake because they did not check with the financial committee, we only have a \$100,000 budget for this position." Even if this statement is true, the questionnaire with the published figure was in the public domain for months. The rabbi felt uncomfortable and tricked. The questionnaire lists the figure where negotiation begins. That figure must be respected. Sometimes a congregation starts with a very low written offer, thinking if the right candidate comes along there will be time to go higher. It has been the experience of the JPC that a stated amount in the questionnaire that is below market value acts as disincentive for candidates.

Candidates will not apply to a congregation where the salary figure is not competitive. Some congregations say that "For the right for the right candidate we will find the money" this mindset will not be helpful because candidates cannot read the congregation's mind and are unaware that they will get that money.

Third, do your homework. If it has been some time since you engaged a rabbi, or if this is your first time, compensation may be higher than you expected. Talk to other local synagogues, call Rabbi Schoenberg, or call another Jewish professional in the community for comparable compensation figures. Rabbis expect to receive more compensation than in their prior position. At times this sum is more than the congregation has been paying its departing rabbi. It is the synagogue's responsibility to pay a competitive wage.

Fourth, how do we conclude the negotiation? By being gracious and generous at the end. We want to begin a relationship on an upbeat, positive note. Write a letter summarizing the negotiations before the contract arrives.

Contract and Benefits

Discussing compensation and benefits is very important to both congregation and rabbi. However, it is the last item to be finalized; after all other employment issues have been worked out. Only when the two parties have made a commitment to each other is it appropriate to discuss finances. An honest, open discussion should include the financial condition of the synagogue. Many rabbis have learned too late that a synagogue cannot meet its financial commitments. It is

important for the congregation to honestly state the salary range in the questionnaire. It is appropriate for the rabbi to ask questions about the budget and the financial condition of the synagogue. The rabbi may ask to see a copy of the congregational budget. The formula for a successful first negotiation is flexibility. The congregation should be as flexible as possible because the needs and requirements of each rabbi will vary. For most rabbis, the most important benefit is pension contributions. You will want to explore options with your rabbi to be.

After many years, both the RA and the USCJ have agreed to one model rabbi engagement contract. It is a guideline to topics to be discussed. It serves as a checklist for both parties. The contract is a document that reflects wisdom, practical experience and generosity of spirit. We expect all parties to use this new contract. It is available from both the JPC and the USCJ websites.

Both the RA and the USCJ agree that your congregation will pay for all the actual moving costs involving your new rabbi and their family (including packing of breakables).

The Compensation Equation is:

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{Base salary} \\
 + \text{ Pension} \\
 \text{Housing allowance} \\
 \text{Social Security (amount paid by employer)} \\
 \text{Medical and dental insurance} \\
 \text{Disability} \\
 \text{Life insurance} \\
 \text{Dues} \\
 \text{Book allowance} \\
 \text{Convention} \\
 \text{Continuing education allowances} \\
 \hline
 \text{TOTAL COMPENSATION}
 \end{array}$$

Housing

Housing is a sensitive and complex issue. Over the last ten years, rabbis' views of housing has changed. Today, most rabbis expect to purchase their own home. Only a small minority prefer on living in a congregational parsonage. Whether a rabbi lives in a parsonage, rents an apartment or purchases his or her own home, rabbis wish to reside in walking distance of the synagogue. Naturally when a rabbi purchases a home, appropriate housing compensation is expected to enable the rabbi to meet home ownership obligations. As housing prices have risen, it has become common in high cost of living areas for congregations to provide interest-free loans to rabbis to help with a down payment or to share equity in the congregational parsonage. Sometimes congregations 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 congregation to enable the rabbi to purchase a house because it quickly builds the rabbi's loyalty to your congregation. Sometimes congregation and rabbi agree that purchasing a home is a condition of second contract.

Some rabbis still look forward to living in a congregational home and expect the synagogue's home to fit the needs of their family. For example, the new rabbi may have a large family, while the existent parsonage contains only two bedrooms. Congregations with a parsonage may need to consider making housing improvements or changes immediately to enable a rabbi to accept the position. Of course, normal maintenance like cleaning and painting should be done before the new rabbi arrives. Sometimes after a congregation has found the right match in a rabbi and has been able to agree to financial terms, they are unable to agree about housing arrangements. Unfortunately, this is a place where negotiations can easily break down. Rabbis and their partners need to see the parsonage early in the process and not in the final stages so they can evaluate if it is appropriate for their needs. Housing is both a rational and emotional issue and must meet the needs of the rabbi, partner, children and the congregation. The key here is for the congregation to be as flexible and as thoughtful as possible to meet the needs of their new rabbi their family needs which may be different from the former rabbi and their family.

Third Party Negotiators

Most rabbis will negotiate their own contracts. It is quite common, however, for some rabbis, like other professionals, to seek counsel of both an accountant and an attorney to review documents. Search committees already know that negotiating for compensation and benefits is very difficult for most rabbis even when there is absolute agreement. In a recently completed survey of rabbis who sought new pulpits, when asked, "What was the most difficult part of the process?" the overwhelming response was "negotiating my contract." As a result, it is becoming more common for rabbis to ask to have a third party, most often an attorney, to represent them in negotiations.

Some congregations balk at this. Please understand that rabbis represented by counsel are able to focus on the spiritual, special relationship so strongly desired by both congregation and rabbi. It is helpful to bear in mind that third party representation is more and more commonplace in the business world. When Louis V. Gerstner, Jr. left RJR Nabisco to become the new chairman of IBM in the spring of 1993, the well-known attorney Joseph Bachelder served as the intermediary. Many said it was Bachelder's ability as an intermediary that made the change possible. The Wall Street Journal reported that using "lawyers as a go-between in pay discussions can help executives save face and avoid acrimonious discussion." You don't have ill feelings over pay negotiations. Clearly, if this is true in the business and financial community, it may be helpful to a rabbi to have someone negotiate on his or her behalf. Most congregations, schools and organizations understand that the rabbi is an educator or spiritual leader first, and an executive second. It has been our experience that more rabbis ask a third party to represent them and more and more congregations and organizations are fully ready to accept this arrangement. Both congregation and rabbi should be careful not to take personally any decisions about finances. Employment negotiations can be stressful for all concerned. Once this stage is concluded, all parties should put this phase behind them. When the numbers and discussion are concluded, then the parties should commit the arrangement to writing in a formal way.

Concluding the Process

Yashar Koah! The search committee and the rabbi need to inform the JPC that the pulpit is no longer vacant. Once the JPC receives notification, your congregation will be removed from the placement list and an announcement will be made naming your new rabbi. However, it is critical that the search committee understand that even after you have made your selection, you have negotiated and signed a contract; your responsibilities are not finished. The search committee should now engage in a transition process to ease the entrance of the rabbi into the congregation.

PART VII: TRANSITION:

וְאֲנִי תְפִלְתִּי-לְךָ יְהוָה, עַת רְצוֹן אֱלֹהִים כָּרַב תְּסַדֵּד - עֲנֵנִי, בְּאַמֶּת יִשְׁעֶךָ

“As for me, may my prayer come to you, O Lord, at עת רצון, a favorable time: O God, in Your abundant faithfulness, answer me with Your sure deliverance.” (Psalms 69:14)

The task of your search committee is more than “finding” an appropriate rabbi or making the right match for your congregation. Your committee now can make sure that the incoming rabbi will succeed in his or her new post and that the congregation will be accepting and supportive of the new rabbi. The work place literature calls this task - transition. We have learned from the business literature how great an impact this in-between time can have on the long-term success of the business enterprise. After 20 years of observing congregations in transition, we can say transition can have an even greater impact in the synagogue setting.

A Favorable Time עת רצון (*Eit Ratzon*)

The JPC calls the transition process *eit ratzon*, a favorable time. The synagogue service begins with the *Ma Tovu* quoting Numbers 24:5. “How fair are your tents, O Jacob, Your dwellings, O Israel.” This prayer is really a prayer for transition between our secular lives and the holy. These words were uttered by Balaam, who had been hired to curse Israel; they have the distinction of being the only prayer in the *siddur* attributed to a non-Jew. They are included because Talmud Sandhedrin 105b understands the tents as Jewish schools and synagogues. It makes sense to begin the prayer service with a reference to the synagogue. The verses that follow in the *siddur* are not connected to the verse from Numbers. Why are they brought? Each one has a veiled reference to the temple. Psalm 69:14 states: “As for me, may my prayer come to You, O Lord, עת רצון at a favorable time, O God, in Your abundant faithfulness, answer me with Your sure deliverance.” עת רצון is understood by the Rabbinic commentaries and the Talmud to be a reference to public prayer. Each of these four verses of the *Ma Tovu* has something else in common besides the reference to the Temple. Each one has a prominent use of the first person-*ani*- I/me; the Hebrew word for “I” is the leitmotif of the whole composition. The crux of our problem of prayer is the all-pervasive sense of self. We are bringing our *ani*, our ego, to the prayer service and this gets in the way of our relationship to the Divine. To worship fully, we must move from self-centered consciousness to divine-centered consciousness. The *Ma Tovu* prayer is a tool of transition from our secular ego to a Divine connection. The editors of the prayer book understood the need for some creative poem to change the mindset of the person about to pray. Just as we need a device to transition us to be ready for divine service, so too we need a tool to transition us to accept the new rabbi into our congregation as well. Just as the prayer book uses a mechanism with intent, we need to create a consciousness of process for our congregations.

Research by the Alban Institute, an ecumenical center that studies congregations, attests to the fact that how a congregation says goodbye to its former rabbi is critical to the congregation’s future emotional well-being and its ability to engage emotionally with the new rabbi. By being honest about the range of emotions that the rabbi’s departure stirs up in many

congregants, the process of saying goodbye can be a process of development for individual members of the synagogue and the congregation as a whole. Congregations pass through periods of separation consisting of grief, anxiety, guilt, anger and acceptance when they separate from their rabbi, similar to an individual who experiences a personal loss. Eventually, congregants achieve acceptance, healing and a desire to move forward. By helping the congregation deal with its emotions as it says goodbye to its former religious leader, the search committee can help congregants grow as individuals and as committed Jews. Conversely, by repressing the feelings of congregants, by denying the expression of emotions that separation engenders, we cripple our congregants' ability to function well within the synagogue community. These repressed emotions will ultimately surface in unhealthy ways, endangering the relationship with the new rabbi.

Here are some examples to set the scene: One Midwestern congregation's rabbi left after almost two decades of service to join a larger congregation on the West Coast. A new rabbi was engaged by the Midwestern congregation. Its congregants kept inviting the former rabbi to return to officiate at life cycle events; he continued to return for several years. Everyone involved, both rabbis and congregants, came to acknowledge that the ongoing relationship had a negative impact on the new rabbi to the point that his contract was not renewed. The congregation's inability to disengage from the former rabbi sabotaged the current rabbi. Emotionally their rabbi was still the former rabbi; they were never able to transfer their allegiance to the new rabbi. The former rabbi and the congregation had separated physically, but neither emotionally nor spiritually.

On the other hand, a rabbi recently retired most graciously. Although he did not move out of town, he made it a point to give the new rabbi breathing space. He declined offers to officiate at his former congregation, while accepting with pleasure invitations to come as a guest. He refused to talk about the new rabbi, or to comment on the changes in the synagogue. His behavior freed the congregation to form a good relationship with his successor, who has been there happily for five years.

Eit Ratzon is also a one-day study work-shop on transition and organizational dynamics, organized by the JPC, that is held in a variety of locations accessible throughout the country. Held every year since 1994, עת רצון *eit ratzon* offers rabbis and congregations an in-depth look at the process of transition. Theoretical constructs and specific practical suggestions are explored to help rabbis and congregations achieve auspicious beginnings. Participants develop the common language of analysis, skills, and sensitivities needed to appreciate congregational history. The lay leadership of the congregation is encouraged to participate along with the rabbi. Saying goodbye and letting go of the rabbi who is leaving builds success for the rabbi who is entering.

Theory of Leadership Transition – Attending to Emotions

Let us begin with some theory and background. Author William Bridges notes that there are three distinctive stages to a successful transition: Endings, the Neutral Zone and New Beginnings. Each stage has a physical, external element. Each stage also unleashes a variety of emotions in participants. In order to successfully pass through each stage, individuals and institutions have to deal with the emotional component as well as the concrete, material tasks.

In order for there to be a beginning, we need to take care of the ending. When what has happened previously stops, that is the external change. However, the word "Endings" implies the internal, emotional transition - the way things have been experienced is now over. A piece of life

is now gone. That is why endings have so much impact. The issue is how to let go of the past. Bridges reminds us that we tend to underestimate the impact leaving has on us. Your congregation is the source of deep emotions. People have a natural resistance to leave-taking. It is hard to deal with it realistically. If we don't deal well with the endings and the letting go, we have to go back and do it later to have a successful beginning. There can be no denial of these feelings, only a delay. If a congregation tries to repress these emotions, they will ultimately surface in unhealthy ways, endangering the relationship with the new rabbi. We knew and loved the habits of our recently retired rabbi of 30 years, but we even have to emotionally let go of the unhappy two-year tenure of the rabbi who was not a good match. We need to be intentional about the letting go. In any ending, we lose our comfort zone, that is, what is familiar to us. Congregations need to validate the emotions congregants feel around the ending of the tenure of the exiting rabbi.

There is a middle stage of transition. Bridges calls it the "Neutral Zone;" a colleague quoting, Genesis 1:2, called it "*tohu vavohu*-the chaos time." The neutral zone is an in-between state when the old way of doing things or 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 quick sand. In the synagogue world, this is the time in-between rabbis. We know one rabbi is leaving, but the next rabbi has not yet arrived. Because this in between zone is such an uncomfortable place, people are tempted to return to the past or bail out completely. Old wounds tend to emerge with a vengeance. Bridges reminds us that though it may feel like dead empty space and it appears that nothing productive is getting done, in fact, important internal work takes place. "It is during the gap between the old and the new that the organization's systems of immunity are 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. We can see this experience of the neutral zone as a blessing. If we use this time for reflection and self-evaluation, it can lead us to deeper self-understanding. The JPC suggests to congregations and rabbis that it helps to get through the neutral zone by writing a creative blessing for this period.

Finally, there is the "New Beginning," the final of the three stages. The New Beginning is the emotional renewal of commitment to and identification with an organization. It comes slowly after a healing process. It cannot be done mechanically. A New Beginning actually means the creation of a new identity. The task of the third stage is to form a new sense of purpose and a new sense of meaning. The trap is to think that a New Beginning is easy and happens quickly. Creating a new identity takes time. When there are problems with beginnings it is usually because there have been unresolved problems with endings either by the rabbi in the former environment or by the congregation in the current environment. Organizations tend to overlook the importance of "Endings" and the "Neutral Zone" and to start with the "New Beginning," so it is the final phase that gets the blame if the new rabbinic relationship doesn't get off on the right foot. It is helpful to see the difference between a start-up and a "New Beginning." The new situation, the external reality, starts. That can happen 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,” which is getting everyone realigned behind the start, cannot. “New Beginning” is the internal, emotional component of the change. The “New Beginning” requires that people are comfortable with their new identities, that they have rebuilt their worlds, regained confidence and that they feel at home. We need to remember that rebuilding takes time.

Bridges teaches that there are four major adjustments the new leader has to make in executive transitions. Bridges was talking about the business environment, but there are clear parallels to the synagogue. The first thing that will be different for the rabbi and the congregation will be the rabbinic role. Each individual rabbi emphasizes a different aspect of the rabbinic role. For example, your new rabbi came from a small congregation where the rabbinic role was more like chaplain or consultant, now in your larger situation the new rabbi is more like a manager or statesman. The new rabbi sees his role first and foremost as an educator; your congregation is used to a rabbi whose strength is as a pastor. The transition committee should inform the new rabbi how the role of the rabbi functions in this particular congregation.

Second, for both rabbi and congregation, the job situation changes relationships. There is a new board, new staff, and new key people for the rabbi to get to know. Even if the change is a promotion in one place, people will have different expectations and relationships with the “new” senior rabbi than with the “former” assistant. For congregants and congregational leaders, a new relationship has to be undertaken with the newly-engaged rabbi. Even when the congregant has been on the board for twenty years, he or she will have to transition into a new relationship with the new religious leader. Third, a new position changes rabbinic routines. For you, a new rabbi may change the routines the previous rabbi established. A congregation that called the placement office to ask if we had a policy about which day of the week we taught students to take off, because the new rabbi chose Tuesday rather than Wednesday to not come by the office. Finally, a new rabbi can also affect the congregation’s assumptions about the rabbinate as a whole. For a congregation whose rabbi retired after 30 years, the image of the rabbi was an elderly statesman, now it is a dynamic energetic woman leader. Another congregation assumed its new religious leader could read Torah as easily and effortlessly as its prior rabbi. The new rabbi needed time to prepare. The transition committee needs to guide the rabbi in seeing how their assumptions about the rabbinate need to be adjusted to the new environment. Aware that there are so many internal changes going on should make us sensitive and empathic to the emotions of all involved.

Transition management is complex because we are dealing with the emotions of many people. Multiple transitions are going on, not just one. There is an overlap of emotions. People will be at different places on the transition continuum. The synagogue leadership may be further along than a less-involved congregant, but that does not make transition issues any less significant for the less-involved congregant. The staff of the synagogue and the rabbi’s family also goes through transition and experience emotional upheaval as well. In fact, in some ways the transition for the rabbi is easiest because she knows where she came from and where she is headed. The rabbinic family has less information about what is expected from them in the new setting.

It is important to understand the theory. But you still personally experience the impact of transition yourself. In order to help others through their transition, you must help yourself first. Understanding this transition theory is not just an academic exercise for congregational leaders and their newly engaged rabbis but critical for the success of their joint endeavor. Only when the

congregation has appropriate transitions will the rabbi become an effective leader in their new positions. Research stresses the importance of the first six to twelve months in a new congregation. What happens in these first few months is critical for what will happen over the long-term. Literature in the business community points out that most new CEOs of companies are promoted from within. That is why there were so many stories about Louis Gerstner, Jr. who was an outsider coming not only from another company, RJR Nabisco, but from another industry when he became head of IBM. There were questions about how successful it could be to bring someone to head IBM who was not deeply knowledgeable about the computer world. In the congregational world, almost without exception, the new rabbi is an “outsider” coming from another synagogue and another community, not familiar with the culture and the history of the new community. Here, the search committee can be of critical importance as it switches gears from managing the search to managing the transition. Its major task is to give support to the rabbi. Now let us move from the theory to the practice.

Endings

An initial announcement has been made, either by the board or the rabbi, that the rabbi is leaving. The first reaction of the congregation after hearing of the impending loss can be shock, disappointment, fear, or anger (at the rabbi for “deserting us” or at the board “for kicking the rabbi out”) or relief (“It’s about time the board finally made a decision”). In any congregation, some or all of these emotions may combine. Whatever reaction an individual has, he or she always experiences a level of anxiety and concern about being without a rabbi. If a new rabbi is to succeed, a congregation must be able to separate from its former rabbi in an appropriate manner. In the quest for a new rabbi, congregations tend to ignore the emotional process of separation. A congregation looking for a new rabbi is concerned about the future; however if a new rabbi is to succeed, a congregation needs to be able to do the “finishing work,” separating appropriately from its former rabbi. Laying the groundwork for the future must include acknowledging and celebrating the past. The congregation has to put closure on that phase of its collective life which is now coming to an end.

At one search committee meeting, there was much discussion in which great hostile feelings were directed at a former autocratic rabbi. Amazingly, the rabbi had retired twenty years earlier, and had been dead for the last five years! Since the congregation had never worked through their feelings for this former rabbi, relationships with successor rabbis were poisoned. In fact, they could not keep a rabbi for more than three years at a time. Old emotions ultimately surface in unhealthy ways. On the other hand, by consciously saying goodbye and attending to the emotions engendered, a congregation and rabbi are free to form healthy new relationships.

A rabbi recalled how a congregant, a past president who was very active on the board, suddenly stopped coming to *Shabbat* morning services after the rabbi announced she was leaving. The rabbi deliberately searched him out. He was angry that the rabbi was abandoning him and the congregation. But the rabbi’s leaving had actually triggered an even deeper feeling of loss because this board member’s own daughter was in the midst of a relationship with a non-Jew and the member feared the loss of her and now the loss of his rabbi. When they finally met, the rabbi discovered he was broken-hearted over the fact that his daughter was dating a non-Jew. His grief over a growing separation from his daughter co-mingled with his feelings regarding the loss of

his long-time rabbi. By helping him sort out his issues and express his emotions, the rabbi helped him move towards resolution and towards a positive relationship with her rabbinic successor.

The board should devise an appropriate procedure for completing the term of service with its rabbi, whether he or she was legendary after thirty years or whether a two-year stay was a difficult experience for all. Here are six factors coupled with six practical steps that will help the congregation end well and be able to separate from its rabbi.

Embrace Emotions

Congregants often develop strong emotions about their rabbi; wise synagogue leaders acknowledge these emotions. They allow people to vent informally to them over *kiddush* and formally through public ritual, even when the rabbi has served for a relatively short period of time. The rabbi has established many personal relationships that are meaningful both to members of the congregation and the rabbi. The principles and strategies of transition apply both when rabbi and congregation separate after a successful tenure and when the relationship has been difficult. In fact, while these transition strategies apply under normal conditions, they can be particularly helpful when rabbi and congregation part under less than ideal circumstances. In such situations, congregants may be a reluctant to deal with uncomfortable feelings and hostile emotions. However, our experience has been that when transition with the former rabbi has been handled graciously, congregants will attain the confidence to relate appropriately to the incoming rabbi.

Communicate Directly to Congregation

When a rabbi is not continuing with a congregation, a letter from the congregational leadership should be sent immediately to inform the congregation. This letter should announce that a rabbinic search committee has been established (or is being established), and list the steps of the congregation's search process. At the same time it is appropriate that the president send a second public letter thanking the rabbi for their years of service. This good-bye letter acknowledges the end of an important relationship and celebrates accomplishments. In addition, the departing rabbi should send a letter to the congregation as well. The congregation and the rabbi should be direct and as honest as possible about the reason why the rabbi is leaving.

Public Goodbye

There should be a ceremonial, public goodbye to the religious leader of the community, to foster a sense of closure for both rabbi and community. This is always strongly recommended, even when the relationship between the rabbi and the community has been less than harmonious. This symbolic gesture evokes and restates the values and commitments of the congregation. Even if the relationship between the parties is an angry one, the rabbi still has had an impact upon the community, and the public goodbye serves as an opportunity to restate the rabbi's message and agenda which will continue after he has left. The farewell may be either a service or social event, as time and place dictate.

Healing is a crucial part of the search process. Ritual in general and this public goodbye

in particular can serve as a healing experience for both the congregation and the rabbi. Emotions and feelings often are more easily released in response to symbolic events. The theologian Paul Tillich teaches us: “Symbols point beyond themselves to something else. They point beyond themselves ‘to meanings.’” That is why ritual can be so powerful in the case of saying goodbye to a rabbi. The ritual symbolizes all the emotions of loss, grief, anger, bewilderment over both what was and what could have been and gives the community permission to face their feelings. It is helpful for leaders to articulate their own feelings to facilitate the transition for others.

Take Time to Reflect as an Individual and as a Committee

Reflect on what is over and what is not. Be aware of your own emotions. Congregants, as well as the rabbi, go through stages of anger, grief and loss when a rabbi leaves. It doesn't matter if the rabbi's tenure was a general success or failure, or if you personally had a positive or negative relationship with the departing rabbi, when a rabbi leaves, it still evokes all the emotions of an ending in the hearts of lay people. Reminding others and ourselves about the continuities helps. It is important to remember that not everything changes. Think about what you learned from your departing rabbi. What will be different for you?

One way to do this is to keep a log, diary or journal. As we grope through a transition and feel “caught in the quicksand,” jotting down feelings and observations is a way to both capture the experience, and over time 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 we write without giving thought to spelling, grammar, or anyone else reading what we have written, we can frequently bypass our logical, rational selves and get into our heart space. Many congregants have informed us that they personally benefited from keeping a journal. Congregants who have served in a leadership capacity under the departing rabbi, who feel particularly close to him or her, or who feel strongly negative towards him or her will learn about themselves by noting the range of emotions the rabbi's leave-taking evokes. The leadership may wish to publish the questions below in the bulletin to encourage congregants to think about them.

- * How am I feeling about the rabbi's departure?
- * At what other time did I have similar feelings?
- * What is the rabbi's legacy?
- * What was my relationship to the rabbi?
- * What do I need to let go of?
- * How can I be helpful to others who are feeling a loss?

The more you are in touch with your own emotions, the more you can be available to help others in your community. Facing the pain of leave taking is a brave and necessary task for a successful ending.

Private Goodbyes

The departing rabbi will have less public goodbyes. Goodbyes need to be more than program-oriented; they must be people-oriented. Individual congregants have established a host of personal relationships with the rabbi, some good, some less so. Now is the time for letting go

of old grudges and for asking forgiveness from the former rabbi. Some people will want to visit with the rabbi privately. Others will want to send a note. One rabbi shared with us that his congregation circulated a diary, enabling all the members of the community to write personal notes about their experiences and interactions with the rabbi over the years. It was a satisfying document for both the rabbi and the community. By consciously making an effort to facilitate personal goodbyes, congregants will be able to move on with a fuller heart and a sense of closure to the next rabbinic relationship.

Closure With the Outgoing Rabbi

A sub-committee of the search committee should meet with the rabbi who is leaving to review with the rabbi his or her view of the synagogue, past and future. The rabbi's views and observations are important input into the questionnaire and offer perspective for the search committee. This discussion should help the congregation in its self-study. The information that the rabbi is able to share with the committee can become part of the search committee's process of seeking the widest possible consultation on the challenges facing this particular congregation. The outgoing rabbi can help delineate issues of concern, but should not be part of the process of interviewing candidates or of the formal placement process. This meeting is also a critical time to discuss and to clarify expectations and responsibilities for the daily activities and planning that will occur over the next few months as the rabbi prepares to depart. Allowing congregants to experience the emotions of leave-taking will promote a successful ending to the departing rabbi's tenure. This meeting also enables the outgoing rabbi and the congregation to keep the lines of communication open during this awkward and complex transition period.

New Beginnings

Mazal Tov! You have elected a new rabbi. It is wonderful and anxiety provoking. Now what do you do first? Form a transition committee. Make sure that the search committee has transformed itself into a transition team. When the rabbi first enters a new community, he or she will have all kinds of questions, many of which were not anticipated at the interview. Some questions will need official answers. Other questions will be of a personal or private 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 the rabbi and the family might need. Some members of the search committee committed to the success of the new rabbi should be available to supply practical helpful information in a timely fashion. 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 prepared to welcome the rabbi and his family to the community, give him a set of keys or even show him which door of the synagogue to use. What a way to start!

Create Relationships

The most important thing the new rabbi can do is establish as many relationships with numerous people as soon as possible. Creating relationships is priority #1 for the newly arrived

rabbi. Recently arrived rabbis and their synagogues often rush to create new programs but the search committee and the officers of the congregation need to slow everyone and everything down and create an emphasis on building personal relationships. Studies show that congregants want the new rabbi to know their name more than to propose a new activity. Thomas Gilmore, quoting a 1985 study of successful business transitions, writes: “Perhaps the single most salient difference between the successful and the failed transitions was the quality of the new manager’s working relationships at the end of his first year.” People are more important than programs.

You can encourage these relationships in several ways. Many congregations create parlor meetings by dividing the congregation into small units so the rabbi can be introduced to constituent groups in informal settings. The role of the rabbi in these settings is to have no program or agenda but to be open to others, to listen, to learn about their needs. When the rabbi does introduce himself, he should speak about his values, not his specific programs. The members want to know the rabbi better but it is too soon to commit to any new programs. The rabbi’s goal is to make people feel heard and appreciated for their prior achievements in the congregation. Afterwards, the rabbi can cogitate on all the different viewpoints and observations and see if patterns emerge or priorities appear that can become the basis for future programming.

You can facilitate meetings between the new rabbi and specific sets of individuals. One new rabbi asked for the list of all the mourners of the previous year as a way of meeting people in an intimate way when she went to these mourners only months after the death of the loved one. Another rabbi asked for a list of those who had serious illness or had been hospitalized and then called to check in with them. Some of the key people for the rabbi to get to know will be less obvious. The transition committee should provide a list of twenty individuals who the rabbi should go out of the way to have lunch with: past officers, snow birds, founding members, special contributors. This list includes many who are integral to the congregation from the past but who are no longer active and it might be hard for the rabbi to recognize their value to the congregation, unless briefed.

You can identify your key group of individuals who are the current active leadership. The rabbi will want to meet individually with them. The rabbi is not just getting to know them; they are creating relationships and beginning to build trust. One search chair put it this way, “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.”

Share the History of the Congregation

We Jews teach that we understand our present best when we uncover the history that has led up to the moment. To help your new rabbi learn your history, the JPC suggest this time line exercise at a congregational meeting. The time line exercise is a historical rendering of the life of the congregation as recalled by its members. The goal of this exercise is to understand how the congregation members situate themselves with in that history and how they understand the place of their congregation within a broader context-local, denominational, national and global. The time line offers an opportunity for a collective effort at history telling. It is a tool for uncovering links between external demographic, cultural and organizational shifts and the internal stresses and strains historically experienced by the congregation. All are key information for the new rabbi to know.

In a large room, cover the walls with butcher paper. Draw a horizontal line through the paper. Above the line, post dates in world history: e.g. WWI, President Kennedy's assassination. Mark when the congregation was founded. Begin by marking 10 year intervals, then 5, and in recent times mark off yearly intervals. Then some individual are asked to input congregational history above the line. e.g. when various rabbis or cantors started 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 paper when they joined the congregation and jot down one or two personal memories as members of the congregation such as a child's *bat mitzvah* or a *shiva minyan* that was comforting. (See **Appendix M** for an example)

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 congregation? 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 and also to tape or video 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 valid and important; we are not looking for an expert to 'correct the history.' All this time, the new rabbi is present and listening. Now, 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 congregation? Can any chapters in the history be discerned? Which stories seem to repeat themselves? Which stories best represent the congregation? Now bring the whole group together to hear the report of each sub group. The scribe should note down the comments.

How does telling the story and knowing the history build success? Story and historical narrative carry the "genetic code" of the congregation. The story has been built up over time, crystallized by use, forged by controversy, and supplies not just the facts but also the emotions behind the events. Knowing the facts is not enough because it does not communicate what the congregation thinks is important and what the new rabbi needs to respect. Stories contain values. For example, in one congregation 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 synagogue 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 the new rabbi or other professional into the congregational setting. The new staff member is not familiar with the history, facts or memories of the congregation. The new staff member is an outsider who does not know the congregational story. Listening to the story, the rabbi or cantor learns that the congregation has a plot, a plot that unfolds with personalities, conflicts, growth, twists, 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 congregation's stories. Who is a member? Someone who can retell one of those stories. In a healthy congregation, congregants own their story, tell it and hear it, and the congregants 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 congregation in its moments of crisis? Is there a master or archetypical story?

Fourth, the time line is a tool kit for change. The story is not finished. Together the new rabbi and the congregation will write the next chapter. It is easiest to move forward by respecting the past. The new rabbi wants to respect the congregation's norms and not violate the patterns that exist. The better way to introduce change in the congregational setting is to build on what already exists. The new rabbi can lead the congregation forward by revisiting, reframing or revising the core story.

Finally, the time line is a transition tool because the rabbi hears the congregation's story, listens carefully and demonstrates respect for what preceded her. The rabbi learns the congregation's values and theme. The rabbi has their own story. How is it congruent to the congregation's? Each needs to know the other story. During the search process, the congregation heard the rabbi's story many times, during the transition the rabbi must hear and appreciate the congregation'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

Share the Culture and Identity of the Congregation

When a new rabbi arrives, one of your first tasks is to instruct them on the values and accomplishments that already exist in your religious organization. What is a congregational identity? Identity can be defined as the synagogue's reason for being – its purpose. What is unique about our synagogue? When we explain the synagogue to others what do we say? A synagogue or community has a culture it has developed over time, is highly enduring and shapes the way people think, act and feel. Identity is the persistent set of values, patterns, symbols, stories and style that make a congregation distinctively itself. It can be lodged in programs, bulletins, gossip, unwritten rules and tacit signs. Identity articulates the individuality of a congregation that distinguishes it from its conditioning environment.

It is important for the rabbi to learn the synagogue culture as quickly as possible. How do you share synagogue culture and customs with your new rabbi when sometimes this identity may be hidden or not yet articulated by the congregational leadership? Here are some suggestions:

1. Ask a representative group of the congregation in a public forum to draw a symbolic representation of the congregation – for example, a heraldic shield. What symbols or images or metaphors reveal themselves? Discuss.
2. On six index cards, ask congregants to name six adjectives that describe the congregation's culture. Discuss.
3. List any acronyms, nicknames, mottos for special events. What do they mean? Now create a dictionary for the rabbi.

4. Draw an internal map of the sacred space. What artifacts are important to the congregation? What ritual or which religious occasions highlight the values of the synagogue?
5. How many small groups does the congregation have? List and describe their functions. The latest small group founded was . . .?

Why does valuing culture lead to a successful transition? First, when the rabbi understands and appreciates the congregation's culture, he builds trust and rapport with the congregation. Second, if there is a conflict between the culture and a proposed change, the culture wins. If a rabbi wishes to introduce a change, she must anchor the change in the culture. Congregational change is complex. The innovation of an outsider or the rabbi may have merit, but it also implies criticism. The best way to accomplish change is not based on facts but on feelings, by positioning the change as congruent to the existing culture. Teach your rabbi your culture so the change process will proceed smoothly.

Explore the Community

At the same time the rabbi is learning about your congregation where they will be working, they must also learn the broader context of the congregation. Who and what on the outside impact and have impacted the congregation? Other institutions are important sources of information of what goes on inside the congregation. You might encourage your new rabbi to meet with individuals from different organizations within the community. You could suggest that the rabbi can ask the outsiders, what is our reputation? What do you know about us? You can take the rabbi on visits to the other local Jewish institutions, day schools, funeral homes, Jewish Community Centers, the local Jewish newspaper, local representatives of the State of Israel etc. If possible, bring along someone from your own institution that has a relationship with the outside institution. For example, when you take the rabbi to meet the executive director of the old age home bring along someone from your own synagogue board who is also the vice-president of finance of the home. Visit the secular institutions already in relationship with your organization: local universities, neighborhood churches, the mayor, the superintendent of schools, local businesses, the religion editor of the local daily newspaper. You and your new rabbi are trying to gather information, create relationship and build trust. Much can be learned from others about your institution and how you are doing. Insiders can wear blinders; insights might be clearer from those with an outside perspective. When a new rabbi begins, many people are willing to share information and be helpful in ways which may not be available later.

Monitor the Surprises

Most initial conflicts between rabbis and congregations are not about large, controversial issues but about misunderstandings over expectations and a lack of communication. When a congregation engages a new rabbi there are always surprises! Some surprises are small and disappointing, some are funny and some loom large. The task of the committee is to try and make as explicit as possible the tacit, unwritten cultural norms that all the congregational insiders know by heart. The outsider would certainly abide by these precedents upon becoming aware of their significance, but trouble ensues if they remain unarticulated. Congregational life comprises

implicit, unwritten rules and expectations of rabbinic behavior as well as the explicit responsibilities enumerated in the job description.

One well-known rabbi serving a major southern congregation told this story: His first *Shabbat* was *Erev Selihot*. As was his tradition, after the *Aleynu* prayer, he had everyone except the mourners sit for *kaddish*. This was fine. The next *Shabbat* was *Rosh HaShanah*. There was a large crowd. At the conclusion of the service the rabbi said, “The congregation may be seated; the mourners please rise.” He said he felt the shock start in the last row and work its way forward until it almost knocked him off the *bimah*. The former rabbi always had the entire congregation stand for the final *kaddish* on the High Holidays and the congregation had seen this as sacrosanct. No one thought to inform the new rabbi because every congregant knew what was supposed to happen. You can imagine the comments!

Surprises are almost always a sign that expectations have not been met. The rabbi and the leadership ought to keep track of the surprises they encounter. Six months or so into the rabbi’s term, the transition committee and rabbi should meet for an informal conversation to compare notes, to see if there are any patterns. The rabbi and the transition committee can agree on corrective measures and can affirm what they have accomplished thus far. Monitoring the surprises helps both the rabbi and the congregation differentiate between expectations and explicitly expressed desires, between tacit assumptions and actual behavior. Dealing with surprises is a good communications exercise. A surprise suggests that there was some sort of miscommunication. The process of communicating, clarifying and correcting is an ongoing one, but it is especially crucial during the beginning of the relationship.

Forming the Rabbinic Liaison Committee

It is the JPC's experience that one of the greatest tools to success for your new rabbi is timely and appropriate feedback. Many rabbis naturally seek out feedback from their leadership. Some congregational leaders are able to provide feedback in a laidback and informal manner. On the other hand, some congregational 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 your rabbi’s path to success. The JPC suggests you create a formal rabbinic liaison committee to meet regularly with the rabbi, at the beginning of the new rabbi’s tenure, to present ongoing feedback so there will be a minimum of surprises and a channel to negotiate expectations.

Reestablish Institutional Relationships

Now is also the time to reestablish your institution’s relationship with national and international Jewish organizations. At the top of this list should be the institutions of the Conservative movement: the USCJ, Masorti Olami (World Council of Synagogues), the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies. What programs do they offer? How has the congregation previously been involved? How could the congregation be more involved?

Provide Documents

As a search committee, you provided a lot of information orally, you told stories, you answered questions. As a transition committee, now provide it all in writing. The president should review with the new rabbi the minutes of the board for the last two years. The chair of the ritual committee should provide the new spiritual leader with the minutes of the past meetings. Provide the synagogue bulletins for the last two years because it is an excellent way to inform the rabbi about the congregational history and records of achievement and also about the synagogue's hopes and intentions. It is critical to understand that the synagogue had a way of being before the new rabbi arrived on the scene about which the new rabbi will be uninformed. Minutes and documents are windows into the environment for the new rabbi to learn not just what actions that were taken, but also what was discussed, how issues were decided, and which issues the congregation was unable to decide. Documents and minutes will allow the new rabbi to learn what the issues are that might bubble up or are just below the surface. Where are the congregational hot buttons? Who are primary movers of these issues? Where does the congregation see itself going? What chapter appears to be ending; which one is ready to begin? Written documents will help the new rabbi be sensitive to the congregational history and culture.

Anticipate that First Change

There is always a certain pressure on the new rabbi to make changes, from the inside and the outside. The competent rabbi will come with an agenda and normal congregational growth will mean changes as well. However, the beginning of the rabbi's tenure is not the time to move fast and make quick changes. The expectation of quick change is a trap. Now it is a good opportunity for both the synagogue leadership and the rabbi to stress the continuities. Lay people continually inform us that their number one concern about the new rabbi is the speed with which ritual changes will be introduced. The real question is: How do we show that this ritual change is really continuity in the religious life of the synagogue? How do we put this change into perspective? Your congregation can review its history to understand that there has been a history of change. Having knowledge of the history of ritual change in the congregation will help the rabbi. The history of change will be a useful tool to show that change has always been a part of this congregation's life despite the resistance to this change. Modifications will come in due time after the congregation begins to trust the rabbi. Remind the rabbi to be in relationship first. Then, when everyone is set, the rabbi can make a change that everyone is ready for. It is important that the first change be viewed as a success. The first change will make a memorable impression; it will have great symbolic value. There is ample evidence from the research literature that first impressions really matter. It takes a very long time to overcome first impressions – e.g. the bad impression rabbis inadvertently create if they unintentionally change a *Shabbat* congregational tunes. Years later, long after the rabbi has forgotten, congregants remind rabbis about their very first service or sermon or the time the rabbi changed the tune on the High Holidays. The first *Rosh Hashanah* is a time to return to the familiar congregational melodies that everyone knows rather than an opportunity to introduce new tunes. Your first change will make a lasting impression, how do you want to begin?

With Intention

The transition period, from the time it is announced that the current rabbi is leaving the congregation until the time the membership feels comfortable with a successor, can be a period of anxiety, tension and apprehension. From many reports, it is the hardest time in the daily life of a congregation. Some congregations experience it as a time of fear. It most assuredly is a time of uncertainty. In some ways it is a time of pain. However, it is also a time of hope. To the extent that the congregation is aware of its feelings and pays attention to the process, it is better able to deal with a difficult situation at a time when it is most vulnerable. One committee chair summed it up in these words: “Be intentional.” The ability to transfer authority from one religious leader to the next is a sign of a mature and healthy congregation. Most well-organized communities are able to do it. It may be a time of transition and it may be difficult, but it is part of an organization’s growth and its commitment to the future. To summarize: How do a rabbi and a congregation make a successful transition? With intention. With time. With patience.

Installation: The next chapter

Every rabbi should have an installation ceremony. At times, the installation is not well-planned to complement or ease the transition to a new rabbi. However, when carefully planned, an installation can be a powerful mechanism to reduce congregational 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 especially when you view the installation as a religious ritual. What should a carefully planned rabbinic installation look like?

In general, one of the purposes of ritual is to take everyday acts and heighten them. Everyday acts, when heightened, become sacred acts. Your rabbi’s installation should be more than a secular event, it should become a sacred occasion on the calendar of the congregation. The installation is where the rabbi, the congregational leadership and the entire congregation meet to recommit themselves to their synagogue, the Conservative Movement, the Jewish people and the pursuit of the holy. We return to our overall theme – that the rabbinic search should be a process in which we feel God’s presence in our lives.

The installation is a key moment when God’s presence and the spirit of holiness fill the lives of people. Holding the installation in the synagogue sanctuary in the context of a religious service makes this symbolic point. The rabbi will function in a public role connecting the members with the Divine

The installation needs to be a public occasion. Congregations are not isolated institutions; rather, they interact, influence, and are influenced by their context and their community. Rabbis are public figures who 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 congregation 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. You should invite representatives of all these outside communities to participate in the service, 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 USCJ representatives.

Rituals in general are denotative event markers and that is certainly the case with a rabbinic installation. One period in the congregation’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 congregation. But this new beginning is not possible without the hard work and contributions of those who came before. Thus the installation is a time to review, recount, and appreciate the past history of the congregation, highlight significant accomplishments of the past and to acknowledge explicitly the recent assistance of those who made the search process successful. Some congregations ask the synagogue “historian” to briefly articulate significant events in the congregation life to all who attend this occasion.

The installation might begin with a moment when the search committee stands and is 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. She ends, “Now we are ready for the next chapter in the history of our congregation.” Appreciating the work of the search committee and reviewing the history helps build congregational self-esteem. Some congregations might want to keep the spotlight only on the incoming rabbi. This sentiment is a trap. The installation is a moment to celebrate the new rabbi but it is also the time for the congregation to raise up the rabbinic-lay partnership to create a vital future.

Congregations should decide with intention where and when to hold the installation. An installation ritual in the context of a regularly scheduled *Shabbat* service most strongly reinforces the sacred calling of the rabbi. A more informal installation on Sunday afternoon might emphasize a new family friendly orientation.

The installation is a symbolic event containing meaning beyond the specific moment and beyond the specific rabbi. A rabbinic installation is a way to express connection to all rabbis past and present, to the Conservative Movement and to the whole Jewish people. The installation symbolizes a connection to local synagogue customs and synagogue values. Some congregations mark the installation by the transfer of a symbol, a gift to the rabbi, that expresses the connection to Jewish life and Jewish community. Some congregations give a *kiddish* cup which symbolizes how many different roles the rabbi must now “fill.” Other congregations have given the rabbi a synagogue 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.” A symbolic gift to the rabbi is a meaningful part of an installation.

You will want to ask your rabbi to say a few words at installation. Rituals can be opportunities to create community. The moment of installation is an opportunity for the rabbi and for the congregation to express and to recommit to their Jewish values that both would like to see perpetuated in this particular synagogue. Around these core values, this new rabbi and the congregational leadership will built their community. The trap is for the rabbi to propose a specific set of future programs at this occasion. The rabbi should talk about what values motivate him, what concepts sustain him, what aspects of Judaism are critical to the future and which *mitzvot* are most important to him without detailing an action program that various synagogue leaders have not had time to discuss or evaluate. It is appropriate for the rabbi and the congregational leadership to highlight synagogue values that already exist and they share in common. It is not the moment to give the state of the synagogue address and make specific commitments to the future. The installation will be an inspiring, symbolic event when congregants get a sense of what values will be the core of the future and imagine how those

values will blossom into community.

The installation conveys a message within the congregation and to the general community. The transition committee can ensure that this program is done well so that the congregants experience it as a sacred moment; a time for emotional release, education and spiritual transcendence. Rabbis continually tell us how important the installation is to them both personally and professionally. The installation event is not just a program on the synagogue calendar but a ritual filled with symbolism and meaning. A good installation facilitates a positive transition for congregation and rabbi. The larger purpose of the installation is to put people in touch with the Divine.

PART VIII: A TIME TO BUILD

עת ללדת, ועת למות
 עת לטעת, ועת לעקור נטוע
 עת להרוג, ועת לרפוא
 עת לפרוץ, ועת לבנות

“A time for being born, and a time for dying; a time for planting and a time for uprooting the planted. A time for slaying, and a time for healing; a time for tearing down, and a time for building up.” (Ecclesiastes 3:2-3)

In the Torah, Yitro, Moses’ non-Jewish father-in-law, gets down to work. The Israelite judicial system will not succeed. Yitro suggests delegating some portion of the legal work to “capable men who fear God, trustworthy men who spurn ill-gotten gain.” (Exodus 18:17-21) Moses took the advice of his father-in-law and set up a tiered judicial system. Apparently, Yitro intervenes because Moses is exhausted. There is more work than by one person can handle, even a person as talented, experienced and strong as Moses. In an interesting turn of a phrase, Rabbi Eliezer of Modi’in comments that Yitro intervenes because it is the people, not Moses, that are exhausted. Because only one person is doing the judging, the people have to stand and wait on long lines bored and impatient. Yitro sees the bigger picture. Yitro shifts the focus from one person on a central stage to a view of the audience. The advice of Yitro helps Moses become a success.

The interchange between Yitro and Moses helps us set the stage for what happens after the transition. Yitro teaches Moses and us how to define success by strengthening the community. After many years of experience, the JPC has learned that there are three areas of initial concern which occupy the congregation and the new rabbi post-transition: Creating a Lay-Rabbinic Partnership, Building Community and Managing Change. Having a healthy and vital congregation or being a successful rabbi is not innate, or an outgrowth of personality or a matter of luck. After the congregation has engaged the rabbi, and been intentional about the transition, it is time to define and build success. Congregations report to the JPC that they are most likely to renew the contract of the rabbi who has connected with the lay leadership, found ways to promote a strong sense of community, and finally promote changes that have moved the congregation towards its next chapter.

Creating the Lay-Rabbinic Partnership

In our enlightened age, the most common model of rabbi and lay leadership is called the collaborative or partnership model. The professional does not just implement the directives of board, but provides daily leadership. The lay people and the rabbi are partners where roles are shared or negotiated. Who is the lead visionary? Well, it depends. On educational issues, it is the clergy. On whether we move to a new neighborhood or not, it is decision of the lay leader. No one owns a particular role. Either the lay president or the rabbi could be the spokesman or the visionary or the leader on an issue. Mutually, good people who know how to communicate negotiate the leadership role. Together, the volunteers and the paid staff create consensus. In this

framework, the clergy are respected; they have a right to a voice. Communication drives the process.

We have many fine examples of this partnership model. A president sits down with the newly engaged rabbi after installation and says, “Rabbi, what do you want to accomplish this year? Tell me your first three main concerns. I will make sure to be a supporter and defender of those priorities.” Every chance that the president has, he publicly endorses the rabbi’s concerns.

When the president sits down with a new rabbi, this partnership model works and is respectful. Yet in their hearts, lay leaders and rabbi both know they are not really always partners. Partners do not fire each other, yet boards can fire the rabbi. Lay people serve for a limited period and usually choose the tasks which they want to work on, while the rabbi is hopefully permanent, obligated to perform all the tasks whether she likes them or not and is present on a day-to-day basis. The rabbi is the chief religious officer, the *m’ara d’atra*, and is not subordinate to lay people about Jewish law. Clergy know that lay people and religious leaders sometimes have different orientations and dominate different arenas. Another model is needed that honors the contributions of both sides but allows for disagreement and occasional differences in orientation.

This other model is called polarity management. A polarity is a pair of opposites, but opposites that are interdependent and in an on-going relationship. The inhaling and exhaling of the breathing process is a polarity. Teamwork and individual contribution is a polarity. The executive and legislative forms of government are a polarity. Being a good provider and being a good parent is a polarity. In a polarity, neither side of the equation dominates the other; either side may dominate at different times – it shifts. In this model, the talents and strengths of both lay people and the rabbi are captured. Peter Drucker calls it the Double-Bridge team. “The double-bridge team is a model for the board-executive team in non-profit institutions. In the double-bridge team, neither player is more important; they are equals, and they are equally indispensable.” A polarity model can be a more accurate manner to describe how rabbis relate to lay people and how lay people relate to rabbis. So we need to learn how to manage a polarity.

Breathing is a simple example of a polarity. On the one hand, you inhale fresh oxygen, which is excellent. But, if you only take in oxygen, you have a buildup of CO². This is a downside of taking in too much oxygen. So on the other side of the polarity you exhale the unnecessary and ultimately dangerous CO². There is a necessity for exhaling. On the other hand, if you only exhale, you will have a lack of oxygen. So clearly, you need to inhale to take in the oxygen and you need also to exhale the CO². There is interdependence. Breathing, of course, is not a one-time event, but an ongoing and continuous situation. The polarity model can be diagrammed as four quadrants. Each end of the polarity has an upside and each has a downside. It never ends; it is never solved; depending on the situation, one side or the other might gain in influence. For example, after strenuous exercise, the body may need to exhale and free itself of excess CO² more urgently than it needs to take in more oxygen. Luckily for us, our breathing is controlled subconsciously. For other polarities, the balance has to be negotiated with full consciousness, tact and skill.

So how does this polarity model help us create a strong bond between lay people and the rabbi? It reminds us that each side has a contribution to make. It teaches rabbis to respect and value the contribution of the laity. It teaches rabbis that they cannot lead without their partner, their ally, their co-contributors, the president and the board. At the same time, the board will understand that although they bear the fiscal burden, their partner, the rabbi, has a valued

contribution to make as a religious leader, not only as an employee. Seeing the relationship as a polarity enables the lay people to identify and acknowledge the contribution of the religious leader on a regular basis. Viewing the bond as a polarity focuses the laity on the religious and educational contributions of the rabbi and not as an employee. Because we see the relationship as a polarity, our task is to do our best and at the same time to provide the resources and methods so that the other side of the pole will also do its best. When it goes right, both the executive and legislative bodies make a contribution to good government. When it goes right, both the rabbi and the board make a contribution to the improved life of the community. This understanding of the relationship empowers the rabbi to ask for the resources needed to get her job done. This understanding of the relationship empowers the rabbi to have vision, to make decisions and to be a change agent. This model allows the rabbi to be a forceful religious leader. This model also allows for forceful and bold lay leadership even on religious issues. Development of powerful and successful lay leadership now becomes one of the goals of the rabbi.

It is important to notice the distinction between tension and conflict. Lay people and the rabbi are not the same but they are part of one religious community. We acknowledge that we will inevitably have disagreements and that we approach issues from different perspectives. The differences are not to be avoided, nor should one side beat up on the other side. Rather, in a polarity, each side needs to learn to manage the tension by respecting and acknowledging the contribution of the other. We understand that tension is natural and normal. When the rabbi pays attention not only to their own agenda but to the agenda of the lay people, the lay people feel involved, engaged and appreciated. When the lay people usually respond by being attentive to the agenda of the rabbi in return, the rabbi feels that their leadership is accepted. When lay leaders and rabbis pay attention to each other's agenda they each learn to see the whole, broader picture. Because this relationship is a polarity, lay leader and rabbi can each state their position forcefully but they also remember that their view may not be the whole story. When we see the relationship as a polarity, we become more resilient to the bumps that appear in the path and have the understanding to smooth them over because it is a solid and well-built road.

When the new rabbi comes to the congregation their first task is to build relationships with the lay people. The rabbi and the board are partners sharing the leadership, sharing the vision and sharing the work. The rabbi and the board are also opposite ends of the governance polarity so they live in tension with each other. When the rabbi and the board work at their relationship with intention, success beckons. The lay-professional bond is the first building block of success. After the transition period, the congregation and the rabbi will find success when they have established a relationship of trust. The next step is to build community.

Building Religious Community: The Basic Ingredients

Rabbis and Jewish lay leaders frequently speak of fostering Jewish continuity through community. We define community as a place of belonging, cohesion, and group identification. Community is the place that supports and inspires us to be our best selves in tandem with others. Given this definition, the notion of virtual community is unsatisfying. In the era of virtual communication, the importance of genuine community is especially critical. What are the basic ingredients necessary to create and nurture thriving religious communities?

1. Community builders respect their institution's history. A strong community honors its collective memory and nurtures opportunities for shared experience. The members often discuss continuity. The next generation learns to appreciate the successes and failures of the previous generations. For example, a congregation celebrating its 75th anniversary displays photos of the young adults who graduated from the post-*b'nai mitzvah* Hebrew High School program dating from the founding of the congregation. Parents and grandparents point out their photos to their children and grandchildren, who integrate the multi-generational connection. Respecting congregational customs also build trust. When someone says "that's not how it's done here," the word "it" may be the kernel around which community is built.

2. Community builders acknowledge and affirm the contributions of its members. No matter how charismatic a leader may be, community is supported and sustained by its members. In a successful community, each and every person is appreciated for his or her individual gifts. Public acknowledgements of gratitude are important community events. The notion of inclusivity is central to this paradigm. All kinds of people need to be brought into the community and welcomed with appropriate programming and support. A successful community should also have a climate of openness that encourages dissent. The rabbi or leadership should make sure that new members or "divergent thinkers" are invited to serve on the board and committees. The leadership should support a revolving cadre of voices and opinions.

3. Communities are caring environments. The synagogue leadership needs to be proactive in resolving conflicts. The synagogue needs to value each person's integrity. Members need to feel a sense of security. For example, if an overly passionate person is about to shout someone down, not let them finish a sentence, or scream an angry sentence, the leader needs to defend that person's right to participate in the discussion. Caring is also demonstrated by support for those who are ill. For example, the *mishabarakh* for the sick can be a *pro forma* recitation, or a thoughtful prayer that enhances a sense of community. When the same Hebrew names are recited each week in a monotone they can easily be forgotten. However, when the names are read in Hebrew and English and the rabbi offers an appropriate comment about the person's illness or needs, the moment can be transformed into one of community building.

4. Community builders provide grounding. In times of confusion and uncertainty, rabbis and community leaders need to exude a sense of calm and security. In the middle of a heated exchange, the leader's voice is one of reassurance. Sometimes the leader needs to demonstrate restraint. We have all attended a meeting in which an angry person verbally attacks the rabbi and demands an immediate response. Often, a simple acknowledgement or nod of concern is enough to diffuse the situation. When we use our presence to foster a sense of calm and perspective, we dissipate the toxic forces that threaten the community. In crisis and difficult moments, community builders exude calm.

5. Community builders articulate values. Successful religious leaders are not only change agents; they need to articulate a vision. The best community builders construct a community around an idea, and not around personal charisma. John Gardner, the former Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare writes, "The community teaches. If it is healthy and coherent, the

community imparts a coherent value system . . . It is the community and culture that hold the individual in a framework of values.” (*On Leadership* p. 113) A synagogue's core idea may be “a learning community,” “a *Torah* egalitarian congregation,” or one devoted to “Israel advocacy.” The specific idea becomes part of the synagogue's legacy. Community builders find many venues to reinforce these values: sermons, bulletin articles and programs. A strong community is values driven.

Perhaps most critical to the formation of religious community is the notion of spiritual leadership. Synagogues and churches often refer to their rabbi or minister as a spiritual leader -- one who views the secular world through a religious lens. Spiritual leaders make ancient tradition relevant to the current generation and are able to frame an idea or event in religious terms. The articulation of religious values is at the heart of building a true community. After the transition, together the lay leaders and the new rabbi need to set community building as an important agenda item. What is your congregation doing to build community? (See **Appendix N** for more concrete ideas.)

Promote Change

In today's congregation there is an urgent conversation going on about change. The desire for change is palpable. Successful change is possible; it needs to be engineered carefully and thoughtfully. Management consultant Richard Bechheart devised the following formula as a conceptual starting point to plan organizational change:

$$\frac{\text{Dissatisfaction} \times \text{Vision} \times \text{First Steps}}{\text{Resistance}} = \text{Successful Change}$$

The basic change process starts with "Dissatisfaction", a sense that things are not right - that things could be better. If the majority of people are satisfied with the synagogue then there is no motivation to move to a new place. A large group must share the dissatisfaction - unhappiness or frustrations are a good place to start, but real urgency really moves the process along. A sizeable group must feel this pain, not just the top leadership. One need not wait for the dissatisfaction to evolve spontaneously; the leadership role is to orchestrate dissatisfaction. Sometimes all that is needed is a well-timed question. For example, the rabbi or the chair of the ritual committee could start by asking a question of the ritual committee, “How do you think we can make our services more joyful?” The process starts when there is a critical mass of dissatisfied people. A good idea is not enough; the people affected must agree that the time is right - they have to feel uncomfortable or unhappy enough to move forward with the change.

Vision, the second step, moves the process forward. Vision is a “compelling image of the future.” For change to happen, people need to know what the future will look like. The image is not a description of current practice or the present situation, but a picture of new circumstances somewhere off in the distance, and a snapshot of what the new situation will look like. A vision is compelling, inspiring and motivating for others. People do not feel pushed but rather pulled to a new place. For change to happen, people need to know where they are going. In our case, the rabbi can paint a vision based on Psalm 100 “Worship God with Joy” of congregants totally involved and engaged in the service. Synagogues services should be joyful because God is

present. Imagine congregants no longer sitting passively in the chairs. Everyone present is singing a familiar prayer to a new upbeat melody. We draw a vivid picture of what the future could look like.

The next step in the change process is to take the right first steps. Change is a planned, practical process. A vision is a dream; first steps are practical and realistic. First steps might include: calling a meeting of a planning group, informing the board that a change is coming, deciding the time to announce the start of the change, organizing the sequence of small steps that kick off the change. In our case, after the ritual committee agrees to the changes, the board needs to discuss the issue. A public announcement at *Shabbat* Services starting a month in advance would let the regular membership know what is intended. Increase buy-in by the board and ritual committee by letting them make decisions involving the change: which new melodies should be introduced. Who should lead it? Ask the ritual committee when would be a good time to introduce this innovation. You will want to teach the new melodies to the board and ritual committee and at *Shabbat* services - on the week of the change make sure several supporters are at services.

In this equation, dissatisfaction is multiplied by vision multiplied by first steps. Because it is multiplication and not addition, all three factors must be present at the same time for change to be successful. If any factor is missing, like any other mathematical formula where there is multiplication by zero, the result is zero.

The final part of the equation is “divided by resistance.” First of all, we learn that resistance is a constant in the equation. Resistance will always be present in every change process. Resistance is present even when it is a worthy idea, whose time has come and the group expresses readiness - there will still be resistance. It is a natural reaction when you push on a system to move that the system pushes back. If possible, anticipate the resistance. Who do you know who will surely resist? Why? Once you guess which constituencies might be unhappy about the proposed change, go out and meet with them. In our example, maybe the resistance will be from the regular attendees to *Kabbalat Shabbat* who are perfectly content with the service as is. One long time regular shouts at the rabbi, "The melody we use for *L'cho Dodi* I learned from my grandfather, and you want to take my memory away from me!"

Resistance is not personal; it is a natural reaction to the change initiative. “No,” is never final, it just means “give me a little time because I am not ready yet.” Another way to think about resistance is to frame it as conflict, and bring all the skills that apply to conflicts in the handling of resistance. Resistance is not a surprise, but a constant that you anticipate and manage as part of a successful change process. Wise lay leaders together with their Rabbi think strategically about how to introduce a change into their synagogue’s life.

Lyle Schaller's Rules Applied to Synagogues

One significant way that synagogues differ from businesses is the way they do change. Synagogues are voluntary associations of people. By its democratic and participatory nature, a synagogue is much more fragile than a business. Changes are always disruptive but they feel more disruptive in the congregational context. Lyle Schaller, church consultant, holds that churches and synagogues do change differently than business in six significant ways.

First, Schaller modifies the Bechart model by adding “appreciate history” to the formula. A sense of continuity with the past is most important in the congregational setting.

$$\frac{\text{Dissatisfaction} \times \text{Vision} \times \text{Appreciation of History} \times \text{First Steps}}{\text{Resistance}} = \text{Successful Change}$$

Schaller claims that “looking back in the congregational setting is an emotional highlight, looking forward provokes anxiety”. Any tactic that connects to the congregation’s traditions and customs is a positive strategy. Congregations move forward when they talk about their tradition, when they see the new step as just an addition to the past, within existing frameworks and when the words “change” and “new” are mentioned as little as possible. In our case, the rabbi could describe 'the new tune' as the continuation of the “*Hasidic* traditions” that are already a beloved part of the congregation’s Friday night experience, which include starting and ending the service with a *niggun*. Framing the new practice as just one more example of traditional practice and *minhag hamakom* is the least disruptive way to move forward. Congregational change has the best chance of success when leaders frame it as valuing the synagogue’s history.

Second, Schaller says that change in the congregational context takes more time - more time than in a business context and more time than any good businessmen would allot. High pressure techniques do not work in the religious environment. Changes never happen immediately, even when they are necessary. Schaller notes that people started driving to church around 1910 but churches did not start building parking lots till the 1950’s. Changes work best when they are introduced incrementally. Since changes in synagogues are usually not the result of unilateral action, but of committee work and probably a vote, it all takes time. The board discusses the issue month after month without committing to action. In our case, perhaps the rabbi or cantor will teach a number of new melodies at board meetings, at community meals and at workshops. Changes happens best in the religious context when the leadership expects and accepts that the process will move slowly.

Third, Schaller contends that changes are the work of coalitions and allies working together and not the achievement of one person. In the congregational setting, you have cultivate your allies and partnerships. The religious leader needs the endorsement and backing of the lay leadership. The lay leadership needs the support and approval of the rabbi to move an idea forward. A rabbi needs the buy-in of the ritual committee, the board and other major stakeholders to succeed.

Fourth, changes take place not just because of the merit of the idea or program but because of relationship. For example, the Ford Foundation gives 80% of its new grants to people it has previously funded. Ford is already in relationship with these people. In a synagogue, as well, the person who proposes the idea is the determining variable as to whether the idea gets a hearing. People need to think carefully about who will propose a new idea. Even if a 'joyful service' is the rabbi’s dream maybe the best way to get started is for a respected lay person on the ritual committee to make the proposal and lead the charge. The rabbi goes to an individual who is a supporter and who he has a good personal relationship with, and this person agrees to promote the change. Next, ideally, this advocate would win consensus from the whole committee and then with this group fully behind the idea of dancing, he would bring it to the whole board for review. Strategize who is the best person to propose the idea.

Schaller's fifth point of difference is unexpected. "Planning is not an esteemed value in the congregational setting." It is hard for synagogues to do serious planning work. There is always a crisis to be solved and everyday matters to manage. It is extremely difficult for the board to mount a planning retreat. Board members acknowledge it would be helpful, but it is just not valued in the same way as it is in a business context. The trap is to push for a complicated, business-type strategic plan because even though such plans make the most sense from a rational point of view, they are too complicated and take too long to implement. In the religious context, strategic plans often get shelved because by the time they are completed, a new board with no interest and no buy-in to the plan is in place. Schaller recommends a short planning cycle by putting forth new proposals as experiments and not as grand new models. He continues that the number #1 reason that congregations move forward is not because of the solid nature of a plan but because there is evidence it will benefit the next generation, the children. In our case, perhaps the best way to introduce the 'joyful service' to teach the post *B'nai Mitzvah* children the new tune. A strategic grand plan to effect change is not as useful as articulating benefits to the children. Then suggest that the congregation experiment with the new service once a month.

Finally, Schaller holds that change is produced more by perception than by facts. In other words, a synagogue does not appreciate a well documented, well researched, fact filled case that the change is needed. It will appreciate a change that fits the perception that the congregation has of itself. The congregation can take a survey about what people think about services, why they come or do not come and what they would like to see introduced. The report could include charts, percentages, quotations, and citations. The board could remain unmoved. However, when the congregation sees the change as part of its identity, then the change may be successful. In our example, if the congregation embraces the vision of itself as place that offers joyful worship, it will be motivated to introduce the new melodies and the dancing that had been suggested. To be accepted, a change must be congruent with the self-perception of the congregation.

In our congregations, to accomplish a change successfully we need to remember several points. The change should be framed as arising from the history and traditions of the congregation. The change will take a lot of time to effect. A broad coalition of groups needs to accept the validity of the change. Key people in the congregation need to embrace the change and be willing to sell it. The change might be introduced as a time limited experiment. The facts of the change are not as important as the perceptions congregants have of the change. Heeding these points will help us successfully implement new ideas in our synagogues.

PART IX: CONCLUSION

יְהוָה, יִשְׁמְרֵם-צִדְקָתוֹ וּבֹאֲרָךְ -- מִעַתָּה, וְעַד-עוֹלָם

The LORD shall guard thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth and forever. (Psalm 121: 8)

We began this manual by noting that, by the early Middle Ages, the most common term for a synagogue was *kehillah kedosha* “a sacred community.” *Kehillah kedosha* makes a value statement that the ultimate aim of the synagogue must always be to cultivate a loving and spiritual relationship with God. The search committee’s task of finding a rabbi may appear to be secular or mundane. But the term *kehillah kedosha* reminds us that the task before us may be the ultimate religious purpose, to secure a spiritual leader to guide us on the path to becoming a sacred community.

Dvar Torah

Rabbi Joel Sirkis was a Polish talmudist who wrote a commentary that was critical of people who relied on just the *Shulcan Auruch* for halachic decisions and did not include the *talum* and *geonim*. He assumed the pulpit in Brest-Litovsk Poland, where he succeeded his teacher, the well known and well regarded Rabbi Phoebus. In his first *Shabbat* at his new congregation it became time to *bench Rosh Hodesh* (Sim Shalom pg 438). The congregation rose and turned and faced the blank wall in the back of the congregation. Rabbi Sirkis was astounded. He asked the *gabbai* "What are we doing?" The *gabbai* responded, "It has been this way in the congregation for more than a hundred years." "But why?" Rabbi Sirkis asked. The *gabbai* said he did not know and that Rabbi Sirkis should ask the oldest living member of the congregation. Rabbi Sirkis visited the frail old man who told him: "Years ago we were a poor congregation without *siddurim* and we did not know the words for "Prayer of the new month", so one member of the congregation wrote it out on the back wall. Once a month, when it was the time to say this prayer we would all turn around to read it." Rabbi Sirkis said, "But it's no longer there." The congregant replied "Some years later we were able to afford *siddurim*. And the prayer was eventually removed." And even more that they did tell him directly. Rabbi Sirkis saw how deeply his congregation cherished their unique history and customs and the next month he thrilled his congregation by being the first to jump up and face the wall to *bench Rosh Hodesh*. Rabbi Sirkis was well on his to building relationships of love with his congregation.

Dear friends, my prayer for you is that your new rabbi honor the unique history and customs of your congregation, so that you and your spiritual leader build relationships of love and trust. May your search be reflective, deliberate, and thoughtful. And may you succeed in finding an appropriate rabbi as patient and insightful as Rabbi Sirkis.

We hope you will use this booklet as your guide to find the rabbi that fits your unique congregation and who will in turn make your community into a *kehillah kedosha*. We wish you well in this endeavor. If you or any member of the committee have questions or concerns, please feel free to write, email or call.

“May the work of our hearts be established for the good!”

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:
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.
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.
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 Jt. 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 Rabbinical Assembly

III. Rules of Placement

1. All candidates for placement 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 Jt. Placement Commission in electronic form.
2. Entered E-Placement by uploading a career inventory.
3. Signed signature form on file with the Jt. 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 JPC.
- 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 Joint Placement Commission, 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 Rabbinical Assembly 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: STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY

Leadership Council for Conservative Judaism 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 should reflect this diversity..

The vast majority of Conservative congregations identify as egalitarian, and a substantial number of our clergy are women. However, many people expect their clergy to look just like the leaders of the past generation rather than representing our current and emerging communities. Such thinking limits the range of candidates considered for each position and deprives our movement of the talents of many of our outstanding professionals.

When seeking to engage new professionals, we recommend the following:

- The 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.
- Be proactive in meeting candidates of different genders, generations, sexual orientations and backgrounds. Resist assuming that these qualities 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 something 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.

Our communities are best served when they seek leaders for their intellectual, spiritual and social skills, celebrating the diversity of the people who have been inspired to serve God and the Jewish people with all their heart, soul and might. 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.”

APPENDIX C: FOCUS GROUP

Objective: To create the congregation’s priority list of tasks both for the lay members and the incoming rabbi; to continue the “opinion” part of the questionnaire.

Process: Introspective work on the part of the search committee at one of its first meetings.

Meeting Format: Meet at the synagogue with invited search committee and selected board members

A. Introduction (5 minutes)

Explain to the group that in order to be listed for placement, the congregational questionnaire must be filled out. Part I is factual, e.g. how many membership units are we?

Part II is a consensus description by people who know the current situation of the congregation well.

B. Core Process (45 minutes)

Divide the group into four sub-groups and ask each sub-group to answer its questions.

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Group I | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · What are the three primary values of our synagogue at present? · What differentiates our congregation from the closest other synagogue? · Closest Conservative synagogue? |
| Group II | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · What three strengths are most important to us in our new rabbi? · What should be the three most important priorities of our rabbi? · What are the three activities we least want the rabbi to be involved in? |
| Group III | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · What are the three most important issues to confront our synagogue? · In what areas do we think our synagogue should be more involved within the next five to ten years? · In what areas of Jewish living do we think our synagogue needs to be more challenged to grow by our next rabbi? |
| Group IV | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · What are our congregation’s strengths? What are we most proud of? · What are our congregation’s weaknesses? What is the one thing around here that should never change? · The single most important issue a rabbi needs to know about our congregation? |

C. Report Back (40 minutes)

Each group takes ten minutes to report its finding to the whole group.

D. General Discussion (20 minutes)

The group leader allows for an open-ended discussion and reaction to the four reports.

Recommendations and changes may be made to the original reports.

E. Wrap Up (10 minutes)

1. Thank the participants.
2. Remind everyone that this is a process and invite them to continue to offer input into the process.
3. Based on this exercise, our knowledge of this synagogue and of its present strengths and weaknesses, as well as the needs we have in the next five to ten years, summarize the congregational priorities and formulate what the three most important qualities in our next rabbi should be.
4. Tell them that we will be summarizing the results of the focus group and reporting them to the congregation. The information will also be added to the congregational questionnaire and communicated to all of the rabbinic candidates.

APPENDIX D: LETTERS TO RABBIS

Non-Rabbinical Assembly Rabbi

Many of you will receive unsolicited resumes from non-Rabbinical Assembly rabbis who learn of the availability of your congregation. As you know, they may not be considered for your pulpit. We suggest you send them the following letter:

Dear Rabbi,

Thank you very much for your resume. Clearly, you are a serious and talented rabbi. However, because we are a United Synagogue congregation, and bound by the procedures of the Joint Commission on Rabbinic Placement, we will only consider candidates who are members of the Rabbinical Assembly. Hence we cannot consider your candidacy. We wish you well in your search.

Sincerely,

Rabbinical Assembly Rabbi

Below you will find a form letter that can be used if your congregation is not interested in a candidate that it has already met or interviewed:

Dear Rabbi,

Thank you for your interest in our congregation. We are impressed with your credentials, experience, and qualifications. You are a serious and talented rabbi. We enjoyed meeting you (talking with you).

However, we have decided not to pursue you as a candidate for our pulpit at this time. This decision was a difficult one for us because of your fine background. We wish you well in your endeavors.

Sincerely,

APPENDIX E: QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

Choosing a rabbi to lead a *kehilla* is a process. It includes a careful self-assessment by the *kehilla*, a review to determine what the *kehilla* expects the rabbi to do and a prioritization of those skills requirements. The JPC, a working group with representatives from the USCJ and the RA, developed this guide for search committees. If you have questions, please call your *kehilla's* *Kehilla* Relationship Manager [KRM].

Finding a Spiritual Leader

Step 1 (first conversation)

The goals of this brief screening call are to:

- connect with all candidates,
- eliminate those who are clearly outside the parameters of a good match

There should be a first conversation with each candidate who submits an application. This initial interview should not take more than 15 minutes. It should be done in small teams (2-3 people) not by individuals. We urge that every candidate be called to allow the *kehilla* to have a sense of the wide range of individuals who are interested in coming to serve. This conversation can be done by phone, computer or in person at interview week.

This is an opportunity to make sure that you are interviewing potential spiritual leaders who are as diverse as the members of your congregations. In order to attract, understand and meet the needs of your diverse community, your clergy and other professionals should reflect this diversity of gender, generation, and health and relationship status.

Suggested questions:

- In five minutes or less, tell us about you.
- What is it about us that resonated with you and prompted 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 questions do you have of us?

Step 2 (Second conversation)

The goals of this step are to:

- allow the whole committee to learn about each candidate
- identify those who will be called for an in-person interview
- allow candidates to ask questions about the congregation.

This interview is with the whole committee. The interview should run no longer than one hour, by telephone or computer. Before beginning the series of second conversations, the congregation needs to identify its priorities for their rabbi. This is the time to raise issues which could be deal breakers (see below). It is not possible to ask all these questions during this interview. The committee should select appropriate questions that are important to your *kehilla*, and ask the same questions of all candidates.

*Suggested questions:***Who are you?**

- In five minutes or less, tell us about you and why you became a rabbi.
- What two or three rabbinic accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction?
- Please describe what being a Conservative Jew means to you. How does it impact your personal observance? What you will expect of the congregation? Who would we be together?
- After reading our congregational questionnaire, what do you feel is our three most important priorities?
- Describe your view of the rabbi's role in recruiting and engaging members.
- Describe how you plan to balance the demands of your extended work day and time for your personal life.
- No one works 24/6. What are your hobbies and interests? How do they impact your rabbinate?

Worship

- Many congregants want dynamic, fulfilling experiences at services. Tell us how you would be a spiritual leader of worship.
- Describe the values you feel underpin *tefilot*. Describe a *Shabbat* morning service you would lead based on those values.

Pastoral

- Our congregants have indicated that being a pastoral rabbi is a primary role for our rabbi. Describe how you see pastoral responsibilities within the scope of your position.

Halachic process

- Describe the process by which you would make a religious decision for the community. Give an example from your previous congregation. How did you work with lay leadership to make a religious decision?
- We are looking for a religious leader for now and for the future, though cannot know what the future will bring. Can you give us an example of how you make decisions that require considering changing Jewish law? How will you shepherd us when it comes to making a religious decision?
- Describe how your approach to Jewish law impacts the kind of *halakhic* decisions you make.

Fundraising

- Like all congregations, we're in need of funds. In the past we've done the following successful fundraisers [describe]. Describe how you see the rabbi's role in fundraising and development activities.

The questions you need to ask - deal breakers.

These are the questions which speak to the heart of the congregation, either core values which the congregation cannot compromise or realities of the *kehilla* which are not likely to change. There should be no more than three categories. Each question should begin with you clearly stating your value or situation. Examples of these kinds of questions:

Example 1. We understand and appreciate the value of a day school education. The drive to the closet day school takes 40 minutes one way. Would this be an obstacle to your continued interest in our congregation?

Example 2. *Kashrut* is important to our synagogue and our community, although some kosher food is available on a limited basis. A local supermarket gets a meat delivery once a week on Thursday. Would this be an obstacle to your continued interest in our congregation?

Example 3. There is no *mikveh* in our local community. Our prior rabbi used the *mikveh* in our capital city, over an hour away from here. Would this be an obstacle to your continued interest in our congregation?

Example 4. Our *kehilla* is well established as a fully welcoming place for the GLBT community, including the full range of life-cycle events. Would this be an obstacle to your continued interest in our congregation?

Summary question for this section:

Based on what you know about us now, what would prevent you from taking this job if offered?

Denouement

- Why are you the right rabbi for our community?
- Do you have any questions for us?

Step 3 - the in-person, mutual interview.

The goal is to determine the candidate with best qualifications, personality and vision create the sacred community that you envision. Is this the right match for both of us? What will we be together? Members of the search committee should be joined by others from the *kehilla* to meet with the rabbi for an in-person visit.

Areas:

You should determine which questions from steps one and two should be asked again. Ask questions by topic for example: Israel, God, egalitarianism or *keruv*. Be sure to include questions which address the priorities set in the rabbinic role exercises. Each interview session should be limited to approximately one hour; if longer sessions are planned, take a ten minute break after an hour before resuming the discussion. Be sure to ask the summary questions noted for step 2:

- Why are you the right rabbi for our community?
- Do you have any questions for us?
- Based on what you know about us now, what would prevent you from taking this job if offered?

There are questions which are inappropriate to ask. Committees should not ask candidates their age, marital status, plans for having children or about handicaps or disabilities. Congregations are wise to respect professional boundaries no matter how curious they are.

APPENDIX F: TIPS FOR SKYPE INTERVIEW

From Skype's website

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 flyaways 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. Thankfully, many standout companies like Cargo, Make Up For Ever and Smashbox have products designed to help you look your best. A few suggestions include: high-definition foundation (creating soft-focus effect in any kind of lighting), blue ray high-definition matifier (refines lines, minimizes pores for a polished look) and blue ray high-definition lip gloss (for a high shine, plumping effect).

Background 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 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.

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Finalists - the mutual interview. Is this the right match for both of us? What will we be together?

Areas:

1. You should determine which questions from stage one and stage two should be asked again.
2. Ask questions by topic for example Israel, God, Egalitarianism, Keruv.
3. Review the rabbinic roles exercise from Aliyah or USCJ.* The committee should establish the priorities of the roles of the rabbi and asks questions based on the priorities. (Please see Appendix J for role of the rabbi)

APPENDIX H: FOCUS GROUP FOR ENGAGING A WOMAN RABBI

Objective: To explore the suitability of a woman rabbi for our congregation.

Process: Use a small group discussion with several prepared questions.

Meeting Format: Two-hour meeting with 20-25 board and search committee members.

A. Introduction: (10 minutes)

- 1) Explain that more and more candidates are women. As of 2012, there are more than 250 female members of the Rabbinical Assembly. The congregation has to decide as a group if a woman rabbi will be a good fit. It is an important decision that should not be made by one person.
- 2) Facilitator will review the religious role of women in the congregation. Review the history of how it came about.
- 3) The facilitator will ask a series of questions. Everyone will have a chance to speak.

B. Icebreaker: (20 minutes) What honors and roles do women have in the congregation now? How do you feel about it? What has it or has it not done for you personally? The congregation?

C. Core Process:

- 1) What would our expectations be for a woman rabbi? Are they different from having a male rabbi? (15 minutes)
- 2) Are there particular issues that might arise if our rabbi were female? (15 minutes)
- 3) Do you believe there are *halachic* issues that prevent us from having a woman serve as rabbi for our congregation? Does having a woman rabbi threaten/coerce women who are already comfortable in their more traditional religious role? If we engage a woman rabbi, will she expect all women to wear a *tallit* on *Shabbat* morning? (15 minutes)
- 4) What special advantages might there be to having a female rabbi? (15 minutes)
- 5) How will the congregation benefit from engaging a female rabbi? (15 minutes)

D. Wrap-Up: (15 minutes)

- 1) Thank the participants.
- 2) Invite them to continue to have input into the process.
- 3) Tell them that we will be summarizing the results of the focus groups and report-ing them to the congregation (letter? Bulletin article?)

P.S. Rabbinical students and many rabbis are available to act as facilitators for this focus group. If you want a trained moderator for your congregation, please contact Rabbi Elliot Schoenberg at: eschoenberg@rabbinicalassembly.org.

APPENDIX I: RESPONSES TO ISSUES ABOUT WOMEN RABBIS

"We are not ready for a woman rabbi."

This is perhaps the most common statement made by search committees and is generally an inaccurate one. It is the experience of the JPC, in conversation with congregants themselves, they are often more open to female clergy than the leadership imagines. Congregants experience women professionals in all variety of situations in their lives: doctors, lawyers, corporate leaders, politicians, etc. Sometimes congregational leaders say "We are not ready" without having done their homework by asking real congregants – they imagine this answer to be correct.

Search Committees sometimes say “not ready” as a means to avoid possible conflict. The congregational leadership needs to ask itself what steps do we have to take to get ready to have a female rabbi. This is more of a question of anxiety and preparedness and not a question of gender. A person is entitled to their feelings and its acceptable for a person to feel gun shy about having a female rabbi, but in the JPC's experience once they haven encounters with female rabbis gender issues disappear.

"We have not been fully egalitarian for not very long, so we do not think it is appropriate to engage a woman rabbi."

Some congregations that have recently become fully egalitarian will not be ready to engage a women rabbi. On the other hand, as part of your congregation's self-reflection, which you are engaging in as a preliminary step of the hiring process, you will also want to examine whether the congregation sees itself evolving in its level of egalitarian participation and comfortableness in egalitarianism. Now that your congregation is egalitarian it has expanded its pool of rabbi candidates to find the best fit for the congregation, without regard to gender.

"Since Conservative Judaism is not fully egalitarian, we do not have to engage a woman rabbi."

One of the glories of our Conservative movement is that we are a big tent movement, embracing a range of options. Some of our congregations are more egalitarian, some are less. Our rabbis, female and male, are sensitive to the unique culture of each individual congregation they serve. The JPC respects a congregation's right not to be egalitarian and the non-egalitarian congregation's right not to be fully comfortable with a female rabbi. On the other hand, more than 95% of the congregations in the movement are egalitarian. In fact, they consider egalitarianism to be a core value and an integral part of their congregational system. The JPC does expect these congregations to interview female rabbis in keeping with their egalitarian values. The congregation will benefit from the wider variety of options and choices in finding the proper fit for their rabbi.

"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."

One of the biggest challenges facing Americans today is balancing the demands of work and family. Both female and male rabbis can partner with your congregation to model responsible boundaries and balances between work and family. If your congregation is questioning the commitment or work ethic of female rabbi, rest assured that the time and effort women have put into establishing their careers will not be replaced with domestic responsibilities. Female rabbis can be important role models for your congregation, modeling on the one hand, a serious commitment to the congregation, and on the other, a deep commitment to family. The JPC has often heard women rabbis respond to this question by saying, "I am looking forward to being your rabbi and being the mother of my children." In addition, women rabbis are well aware of this prejudicial stereotype and understand that even though women rabbis have been ordained now for 25 years in the Conservative movement, they 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.

"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. This is an unsettling period for the congregation that cannot be avoided, regardless of the gender of your new rabbi. Our experience shows that the conflict and disruption has less to do with gender than clarifying expectations and becoming familiar with a new leadership style. The RA invites you to attend the *eit ratzon* workshop and to create a transition committee to help with this crucial period in the life of your congregation.

If true conflict exists in the congregation then you need to ask yourself why are you in the search process. When a congregation is in conflict no matter who the search committee chooses, the candidate will have a harder time being successful because part of the congregation already has a problem with them. Conflict breeds continued conflict. More importantly, not interviewing women candidates because of possible perceived conflict means the congregation may miss out on the opportunity to engage the right rabbi for the congregation. Perhaps the woman rabbi will be adept at healing the pain that currently divides your congregation. As you know, congregations cannot avoid conflict, they can only learn to manage them wisely.

"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 Greeks. After many academic studies, there is no evidence that this stereotype is based in reality. Further, the rabbi's task is to model Judaism as an organic and natural system that encompasses our physical, spiritual and emotional being. The ideal rabbis are in touch with their

emotional life and comfortable with the emotional side of their congregants. A rabbi is not just an intellectual who preaches stimulating sermons, but the pastor and counselor who relates to the entire person. The JPC recommends asking candidates what are you passionate about, so emotions are revealed. Whether male or female, the best rabbi for your congregation will be aware of the emotional component of life. Remember Super bowl winning head coach Dick Vermille cried at press conferences regardless of if he won or lost.

"It is a man's world. Women leaders just do not fit in."

We live in a society which adores clear winners and losers. We are thrilled when Donald Trump snarls, "You're fired!" Despite this, the hottest concept in the business world is now to be non-hierarchical. When barriers are removed, the theory goes, there is more interchange and more interaction allowing for greater idea development. The biggest companies are looking for ways to flatten out their organizational charts. Our Jewish community and our basic texts have been teaching these values for years. From the very beginning of the book of Genesis we are told that each and every one of us is created in the Divine Image. We have the opportunity to model this profound sense of equality by creating institutions that are open to all and by intentionally moving away from hierarchical and exclusionary patterns of leadership.

"We do not want a woman rabbi because we are a prestigious congregation and the other leaders in the community will not see her or our congregation as a winner."

It has now been over two decades since women have become Conservative rabbis. Increasingly, women bring resumes deep with expertise, and bring the wisdom of experience to their positions. They are developing national reputations through innovative discourse, their writings, and their professional work. Such women are an asset to any congregation that they go to, and will increase the prestige of any congregation that partners with them. The question is not about prestige, but about the right kind of spiritual leadership.

"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 will be sensitive to the unique culture of your synagogue. Your rabbi alone does not define your congregation, but rather the culture emerges from a partnership between a rabbi and congregants. A new rabbi will bring changes - that is true. The JPC sees making change in a sensitive and caring way by the new rabbi as a crucial issue in a successful transition. The JPC 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, rabbis understand that liturgical changes should be made slowly and carefully.

Engaging a female rabbi who is a strong feminist does not automatically define your congregation as a feminist congregation, any more than hiring a male rabbi who lived in Israel as a Zionist congregation. Indeed, it is a myth that women rabbi are more 'progressive' or 'liberal' than their male colleagues on religious issues. Again, we should always remember the diversity

among rabbis. Some rabbis *daven* with the *imahot* and some do not, irrespective of gender.

"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 three years to become a stay-at-home mom."

The experience of the JPC is that women who go through the arduous process of training to become Conservative rabbis have made a serious commitment to the rabbinate. They bring all of their heart and talents to their position. Further, our studies have found that women do not leave the pulpit because of the demands of their families. The RA completed a 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. If you welcome your rabbi with a positive attitude and open hearts, and with generosity, your rabbi will succeed and be with you for years to come. It is important that congregational leaders 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 engaged a female rabbi in the past and it didn't work out. We don't want to make the same mistake again. "

Generalizations do not hold up under scrutiny. We all accept 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. The congregation will benefit from self-reflection on why the experience with the former rabbi and what skills, talents, and interests are needed to find the rabbi who is the best fit.

"We have a female cantor already, so we can't engage a woman rabbi as well."

Just as different men bring different strengths to a position, different women will bring different talents and personalities to your community. Your female *Hazan* brings her gifts to your congregation and a female rabbi will bring a different set of gifts. One should not preclude another, just as having a male *Hazan* should not preclude your engaging a male rabbi. A congregation should be looking for the best fit in their new religious leader, whether she is male or female.

"What would our expectations be for a woman rabbi? Are they different from having a male rabbi? This makes us anxious."

The experience of the JPC is that this type of question is normal and about transition anxiety, what will it mean to have a new rabbi in our congregation? It is a normal and expected question and probably has no reference to gender, but to anxiety about the process. 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 in the customs and ways of the new setting. There is room for negotiation and the final result has not yet been achieved. So whether a congregation engages a male or female rabbi, it will be an anxious time for a while and this is expected. Whether a congregation engages a male or female rabbi, there needs to be a negotiation, a give and take, about role expectations.

"Are there particular issues that might arise if our rabbi were female? How do we prepare for this?"

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 *halachic* ruling should be?" Congregations should be aware that after electing a new rabbi there are settling-in issues, and who is in charge is always one of them. Congregations need to reaffirm that their female rabbi is everyone's rabbi for all matters. Moreover, it has been the experience of the JPC 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, congregations need to expect these challenges and be ready with a calm, not an anxious response. The president might say: "Our synagogue policy grants the family of the *bar mitzvah* four *aliyot* and we hope Grandpa will take one, and if not, you can reassign it to another family member."

Yet the most common issue expected to be raised is the work-family conundrum. How will our 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 are very interested in and ask for paternity leave as well.

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

This question is not really asked anymore, but is kept here for historical significance. One of our great strengths as a movement, is that we are pluralistic. We often accept different *halachic* 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* written for and then accepted by the Committee on Law and Standards. A congregation could choose not to accept this alternative but it could not say it was an invalid option for others. Similarly, commencing in the 1950s our movement has begun to accept egalitarianism by degrees, beginning with the *teshuvah* to accept *aliyot* for women. The Jewish Theological Seminary 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

halachic authorities of the Conservative movement to be legitimate. And it is important to note, although it started out as an alternative, 95% of our congregation are now egalitarian and 50% of the students graduating both JTS and the Ziegler Rabbinical School are women.

What special advantages might there be to having a female rabbi?

Sometimes congregations ask, “How will the congregation benefit from engaging a female rabbi?”

Although woman rabbis have now been in the field for more than 25 years, it still feels to some like a new phenomenon in Conservative Judaism. Some might say that a female rabbi signifies that your congregation is cutting edge and exciting, a great message to send to the younger generations in your community. Symbolically, it may mean the congregation 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. In all probability the benefit of having a women rabbi will be because of her own personal strengths and experience and not because of traits assigned to the female gender by the mass media.

APPENDIX J: THE ROLE OF THE RABBI

The rabbi's role is a composite of many tasks and responsibilities. Congregations 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 JPC has found it more helpful to congregation'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 congregations 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 congregations 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 her 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 his 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 synagogue 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. She supervises a staff that might include other rabbis, cantors, school principals and other professionals. She 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 his rabbinate every moment. She understands that where she shops and how she raises her children is carefully observed by her community. She walks her talk. The rabbi

is a role model who communicates authenticity. She understands and uses her power as a “symbolic exemplar.”

RABBI AS VISIONARY LEADER

This rabbi is always one step ahead of his community. He sees 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. She thrives on politics. She teaches the community the values of her synagogue community.

RABBI AS WORSHIP LEADER

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

RABBI AS SPIRITUAL GUIDE

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

RABBI AS FUNDRAISER

This rabbi is comfortable discussing finances and sees her role as marshalling people to fund important synagogue activities. She 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. He needs to know and understand governance and how a board works. He 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 expectations.

RABBI AS WORKING SCHOLAR

The presence and the respect a rabbi generates through her work is grounded in the knowledge that the rabbi is conversant with classic Jewish texts and uses them in her 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. She 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.

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 K: INTERIM RABBI REQUEST

Date of Application (mm/dd/yy; example 09/08/02):

Name of Synagogue:

Name of President:

Information About Synagogue:

Address:

Phone / Fax / Email:

Name of Search Committee Chairperson:

Home Address:

Phone / Fax / Email:

Business Address:

Phone / Fax / Email:

Prefer to receive mail at: Business Home

Prefer to be called at: Business Home

Email to receive documents from the Joint Placement Commission:

President/Chief Volunteer Officer:

Title (Mr., Rabbi, Mrs.):

Name:

Business Phone / Fax / Email:

Home Phone / Fax / Email:

Prefer to receive mail at: Business Home

Prefer to be called at: Business Home

Corresponding Secretary of the Search Committee:

 Title (Mr., Rabbi, Mrs., Ms., Dr.):

 Name:

 Business Phone / Fax / Email:

 Home Phone / Fax / Email:

 Number of Membership Units of Congregation to closest 25, e.g. 225, 750:

Indicate Senior Staff – Please write out Hazan, Educator, Executive Director, Assistant Rabbi, Early Childhood Director, Ritual Director – Indicate full-time=FT or part-time=PT

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Day School in the Community: Yes No

Instrumental Music on *Shabbat*: Yes No

Congregation is Egalitarian: Yes No

Full Torah Reading or Triennial: Full Triennial

Who Reads Torah?

Additional Comments:

Major responsibilities of interim rabbi are, e.g. read Torah, attend daily minyan

1.

2.

3.

Congregational Agenda of the Interim Period is:

1.

2.

3.

During the interim period, the most pressing issue that the rabbi needs to know is:

During the interim period, the congregation sees it as a period to change:

Going forward, what is the biggest barrier that needs to be overcome for the congregation?

The reason an interim rabbi is being requested at this time is:

Compensation is:

Benefits provided:

(To ensure that your Rabbi is of the quality that you deserve, your congregation agrees to abide by the “Code for Rabbinic Placement” which is found in the handbook “Aliyah.”)

A USCJ congregation may only engage a rabbi with the knowledge and permission of the Joint Placement Commission. A congregation may not advertise in the press or on the Internet for an interim rabbi. The congregation may only interview rabbis whose resumes are sent by the Commission and may not engage the services of another placement service. Participants working with the Joint Commission may not seek to fill their pulpits outside of Joint Placement procedures. Congregations and search committees understand that the application of the rabbinic candidate is confidential and will not violate that trust.

Specifically, the congregation understands that the interim rabbi is only engaged for a period of twelve (12) months and the interim rabbi may not be a candidate for the permanent post. The Interim Rabbinate is a professional occupation that requires specific training. The congregation agrees to cover the cost (or reimburse) the rabbi for that training when provided by the Joint Placement Commission.

The Joint Commission may deny placement to a congregation because of ethical or *halachic* violations or a violation of this code. Violators of placement rules are subject to disciplinary action by the Joint Commission and the USCJ, which may include denial of placement or other appropriate consequences.

By checking the box, the congregation agrees to abide by the placement rules. Yes No

Date:

Name of Congregation Representative: (President)

This signature form must be returned to: Rabbi Elliot Schoenberg at:
 placement@rabbinicalassembly.org in order for the placement process to begin.

APPENDIX L: WAIVER REQUEST FORM

Name of Synagogue/Organization _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Postal Code _____ Country _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

Name of Contact Person _____

Contact Person's Email _____

Date of request _____ Date began search _____

How many referrals made (total number of candidates, including senior students)

Status of each candidate

Brief history of past searches (last five years)

Reason for waiver request

Explain the specific nature of your request (e.g. name of non-RA rabbi you wish to interview; change of status from "B" to "A"):

On behalf of the Joint Placement Commission, we would like to make you aware of the limitations and expectations of a waiver request when interviewing a rabbi who is not a member of the Rabbinical Assembly.

- The congregation promises to engage pro-actively in educational programs on Conservative Judaism.
- The arms of the movement may reserve the right to refer to your religious leader as rabbi only if they approve of the specific training the individual has received.
- To ensure they remain solidly within the Conservative Movement and in good standing within United Synagogue, congregations must obtain written assurance from

candidates that they will provide guidance within the *halachic* parameters established by the Conservative Movement's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards.

- Finally, when a waiver has been granted to explore a non-RA candidate, the congregation and its rabbi specifically agrees to abide by the standards set by the RA's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards.
 - A marriage may only be performed if a "get", a Jewish writ of divorce, has been acquired (when applicable).
 - Conversion requires *mikveh* and *Brit Milah*/or "*hatafat dam brit*" to be kosher.
 - A Jew is defined by matrilineal descent.
 - The rabbi may not officiate or be present at an intermarriage.

We ask the congregational president as the synagogues moral and fiduciary representative to sign below to acknowledge the requirements listed above as well as the limited nature of this waiver request. Please return a signed copy to The Joint Placement Commission at the above address.

Signatures

Dated: _____

Please return by email to: eschoenbrg@rabbinicalassembly.org

APPENDIX M: WALL OF WONDER CHART

| | 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 goes Bankrupt |
| Local Events/State events | | | 1976 Schechter School Opened | | 2000 Schechter High Opened 2006 Schechter High closes |
| Congregation events | 1950 Syn founded 1955 Rabbi Salo elected | 1960 Rabbi Felix elected | | | 2000 Building refurbished 2010 Rabbi Felix retires |
| Personal Events | | | 1972 Dan BM | April 10 1996 Gabe BM June 1993 Ari and Sandy Married | |

APPENDIX N: COMMUNITY-BUILDING PRINCIPLES

THE CHECK LIST

1. **Be a Compass.** The rabbi is a spiritual leader who is responsible for enhancing meaning for others. Preaching is valuable; congregants count on rabbis to provide a religious lens on the secular world. Be sure to articulate compelling prayers and make prayer relevant to your congregants. Keep in mind there are multiple pathways to expressing your synagogue's core values; be sure to use one's role as "compass" to convey meaning, relevance, and purposeful connection.
2. **Create Opportunities for Interaction.** Congregants need to interact frequently. Make sure your synagogue is an inviting, welcoming space that fosters group interaction. A *Shabbat Kiddush* is an ideal opportunity for in-reach; find ways to bring people together whenever possible.
3. **Feng Shui.** Make the synagogue's common physical space attractive and welcoming; the proper setting is conducive for informal conversation and connection. Consider how seats are arranged in meetings and gatherings.
4. **Affirm and Empower.** Invite everyone to contribute to the community; empower people to be personally involved and to take leadership roles. Foster inclusivity by offering a variety of experiential opportunities -- for example, *Shabbat* morning Torah discussion groups. Recognize life-cycle events at services. Find compelling ways to welcome new members.
5. **Collective Memory.** Create opportunities for shared communal experiences. For example, consider hosting an outing to a group *mitzvah* project. Music is also a key component for enhancing collective memory; use familiar *niggunim* in your services; sing recognizable tunes on Rosh Hashanah.
6. **Teach Values.** The religious leader is an educator; find ways to evoke and embody guiding principles.
7. **Epistemology.** Use naming and branding opportunities to assert the synagogue's core values. Use the terms "community," "*kehilla kedosha*." Remind everyone that the synagogue *is* a community.
8. **Public Talk.** Provide forums in which members can work through key issues in dialogue with one another. Whether formal programs or informal "water cooler" discussions, these forums can provide meaningful dialogue around a text as well as opportunities for people to share personal narratives.
9. **Create a Safe Place.** The synagogue is a caring community. There are no outcasts or outsiders; each person's integrity needs to be respected. Understand conflict resolution; fight gracefully and always listen. Protect those who disagree with you; create what Ron Heifetz calls a "holding environment."

10. **Be Calm.** The leader provides grounding. Be resilient and emotionally centered. Do not take things personally. Be predictable in offering calm response and reassurance.
11. **Communicate Well and Frequently.** The words "communication" and "community" derive from the same root. Keep lines of communication open and make sure people have easy access to pertinent information.
12. **Be an Historian.** See yourself as an agent of tradition; use storytelling and group narrative to articulate the synagogue's vision in light of its past, present, and future. Be sure to honor founding members and acknowledge past accomplishments.