

## ***Shiv'im Panim: Educating Towards Diverse Rabbinate***

By Jonah Rank

“What can you do that no one else can?”<sup>1</sup>

I did not know at first how to answer my friend’s question. Although he knew a few rabbinical students aside from me, he did not know exactly what it is that makes rabbis different from other Jews.

The truth is that, to officiate at a Jewish wedding, you don’t have to be a rabbi. To officiate at any other Jewish life cycle event—even to serve as the *mohel* who circumcises a newborn Jewish boy—you still don’t have to be a rabbi. Synagogues do not need to be led by rabbis. And history has witnessed many great *posekim* (decisors of *Halakhah*—Jewish law) who were not rabbis.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I thank Rabbi Hayim Herring for encouraging me to write this piece as part of the project surrounding the book he recently edited with Ellie Roscher, *Keeping Faith in Rabbis: A Community Conversation on Rabbinical Education* (Avenida Books: USA, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> In the middle ages, when rabbis were few, cantors often functioned like *posekim* (decisors of *Halakhah*) for certain communities. Notably, their functioning as *posekim* was not always taken well. For a brief overview, see Landman, Leo, *The Cantor: A Historical Perspective*, Yeshiva University (New York, NY: 1972), pp. 15-20.

Israel Meir Kagan, the author of such major works of *Halakhah* as the widely read *Mishnah Berurah* commentary on the *Shulhan Arukh*, was never ordained as a rabbi—until he received the title by telegram in a time-sensitive situation when the Polish passport control required that he name his profession something that they could understand. For one version of this story, see Frand, Yissocher, *Listen To Your Messages: And Other Observations On Contemporary Jewish Life*, Mesorah Publications (Brooklyn, NY: 1999), p. 89.

Even more controversially, as of this writing, the Orthodox institution Yeshivat Maharat has not explicitly bestowed the title “Rabbi” on any of its women graduates. Still Yeshivat Maharat’s homepage notes that its women “graduates are authorized to be *poskot* ([the plural feminine Hebrew word for] legal arbiters).” See *Yeshivat Maharat | Confirming Orthodox Women as Halakhic and Spiritual Leaders* at <http://yeshivatmaharat.org/>, accessed on May 27, 2014.

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After stumbling over my words for some while, I responded, “We each bring our own personality to our rabbinate.” The answer fell a bit flat, both to his ears, and to mine. Five years of education—give or take—is a long time to develop a personality.

As I write these words, I am entering my tenth of ten semesters of my own studies at the Jewish Theological Seminary’s Rabbinical School.<sup>3</sup> During this time, I have taken a few courses that will obviously relate to the rabbinate of anyone who works with people: a course on pastoral care and counseling, and a course on behavioral health issues. My curriculum has required I study material that relates to the work of a *schul* rabbi: Talmudic analyses of prayer, marriage, divorce, and mourning; a seminar on life cycle events; and a seminar on homiletics. At the same time that I have taken courses that will enrich my ability to serve as a spiritual leader, I have taken courses that—no matter how they have fascinated me at times—focus so deeply on picayune parts of Jewish history or Jewish literature I can’t imagine ever arising in my day-to-day rabbinate. (“Rabbi, I hate keeping secrets. Should I tell my kids the truth about the Iberian literary influences on medieval Hebrew rhymed prose narratives?”)

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<sup>3</sup> I would like to note here that much of the information in this essay represents my understanding of what I have learned largely from my own experience as well as speaking with rabbinical students and rabbis affiliated with different rabbinical schools—including a few, though not many administrators. Although I hope that I am accurately able to represent the reality of rabbinical school policies and curricula discussed here, incorrect information presented as factual here is a result of my own misunderstanding.

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It could be that, in an ideal Messianic world, every Masoretic note, every Medieval Hebrew literary work, and every ancient method of dream interpretation will be spiritually meaningful to all Jews. But, until the Messianic era, I'll occasionally worry that getting caught up in the cultural minutiae of Jewish history deceives me into neglecting those immediate challenges that often face the non-Orthodox Jewish world. In the exclusively Jewish sphere—beginning or weak knowledge of Jewish languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Yiddish, etc.), weak motivation for furthering personal Jewish engagement, unfamiliarity with the Jewish calendar and Jewish practices, and disarray in the “organized” Jewish community prevent many Jews from uniting in the project of digging deeper into Torah—in the broadest and in the narrowest senses possible. And if Jewishly-built barriers weren't enough, Jews have also been afflicted with the obstacles of being human: economic struggles, identity politics, the search for personal meaning, wrestling with psychological conditions, problems with work and with relationships, health issues and more.

Rabbis who work with people (as opposed to rabbis who work with books and books alone) must be prepared to address infinite aspects of the human condition; rabbis must work towards healing the intangible Jewish soul. Simultaneously, rabbis are transmitters of Torah. It is through the language of Judaism that emerges in the *peratim peratim*—the finer details of our tradition—where we find the words to couch even the most mundane of human affairs in sacred speech: teachings that inspires us to act with greater lovingkindness towards the world, towards each other, and towards ourselves. Rabbis in training need time

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for Torah study, but at what cost? Isn't the whole point of the Torah that we must love each other as we love ourselves? Isn't the rest commentary?<sup>4</sup> Marginal even? Still, I believe that my own rabbinic education—during and after rabbinical school—must include a humbling depth of material: content that makes me discover every day just how much broader and how much more nuanced Torah is than I could ever imagine. To me, a good education should always teach me more about how little I know today—while still not belittling me.

But, how much can one learn about how one knows so little? Even a lifetime is not long enough for me to study all of the works in just my own Seminary's library. So how much time can we spend in this thing we call Rabbinical School?

Some rabbinical students sign up for a 5-year plan; some spend less time than that in the halls of their seminaries, and some might be seminarians for closer to a decade (and some journeys exceed even that).

One might question both the length of rabbinic studies, and wonder if there is such a thing as the perfect curriculum for a rabbinical training program. As an experiential learner, I personally might not feel 100% "ready" for the Jewish professional world by the time I graduate, but no greater amount of classtime will make me feel readier. I am tempted to guess that no rabbi has learned by ordination everything that a lifetime of a rabbinate can teach. Rabbinic education simply does not end with rabbinical school.

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<sup>4</sup> A paraphrasing of Hillel in Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 31a.

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As far as schools go though: Five years is both a long time, and not long enough a time. In the summer of 2013, I conducted an informal survey over social media, phone, e-mail and in-person conversations, connecting with perhaps 30 prospective, future, present, and past rabbinical students of JTS and other rabbinical schools to see what they felt should go into a rabbinical school curriculum. Were any one curriculum to include everything that had been suggested during these talks, a rabbinic education would not be possible to complete in fewer than eight years. Since the standard five years of a rabbinic education can interfere with other life plans of rabbis-to-be, I was not interested in imagining or promoting anything that would extend rabbinical school nearer to a decade of school.

Because of the breadth of knowledge that is needed to prepare students best for a rabbinic profession, I am in favor of all rabbinical schools developing means to permit students to test out of nearly all requirements. I would hope that rabbinical schools could offer students who test out of certain requirements the opportunity to “compensate” the exempted time with further advanced learning (electives, independent studies, “field”-experiential mentorships and rabbinic positions, etc.). Yet, I would want rabbinical schools to be able to permit that curricular exemptions not always be replaced with other requirements, for some advanced students might be seeking to spend fewer than 5 years in school for a whole variety of reasons (second career students looking to resume working life; students for whom a full education is a compromising or impossible expense; students who previously

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worked as rabbis but “without the title;” students who have had to be absent from school due to prolonged care for themselves, for family members, or friends; etc.).

When a school’s culture relies on financial aid for the continual support of an institution—because students need to pay tuition on time, and administrators need to guarantee that expenses and salaries are paid on time—financial aid complicates the length of rabbinic studies. For programs that offer their students Federal Student Aid, a certain number of credit-hours can be required by the State or Federal government to ensure that governmentally sponsored schools meet governmentally regulated standards. These standards often define education for students quantitatively (the amount of time spent enrolled in classes, and the mathematics of Grade Point Averages) rather than qualitatively (spiritual, professional, intellectual or personal growth). While the system of governmental financial aid helps guarantee that students and administrators can afford to keep their rabbinical schools afloat, financial aid simultaneously requires typically that rabbinical students stay in school longer than they often can afford.

Technically, rabbinical schools do not need State accreditation in order to offer ordination to its candidates;<sup>5</sup> however, the commonality of accrediting rabbinical programs has guaranteed that non-Orthodox rabbinic membership organizations comprise mostly professionals trained at accredited institutions. In

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<sup>5</sup> See for example, “What Does Accreditation Mean?” at [http://www.50states.com/college-resources/accreditation.htm#.VLw1ii7F\\_oh](http://www.50states.com/college-resources/accreditation.htm#.VLw1ii7F_oh) accessed on January 18, 2015. Notably there is also no single Jewish law that would require State approval of one’s ordination.

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the end, there can be something almost unusual, if not suspect, when a privately ordained rabbi seeks to join such a membership organization. (“Does this rabbi *ex nihilo* know what *we* learned at *our* rabbinical school?”) Yet, all formalized rabbinical schools have histories and traditions that go back eventually to exceptional teachers and inspiring principles formulated in a world without accreditation, without MAs and PhDs—degrees that were prohibited from Jews only a few hundred years ago and invented not too long before that. (Rabbi Akiva may have had thousands of students, but he never even applied to grad school.)

In some instances, and more fervently in the Orthodox world than outside of it, generous private donors can sponsor rabbinical schools that do not always offer any State-sponsored degree or State-sponsored financial aid. Before such a change would be able to apply to schools outside of the Orthodox world, we would have to be witness to a major revolution in non-Orthodox Jewish philanthropy. Indeed, one of the greatest challenges facing Jewish communities is discovering the philanthropic model that can finance and incentivize a revolution in Jewish education. Honoring that, I am not yet seriously exploring the option of federally funded rabbinical students in ~5-year programs losing all federal funding in favor of gaining full financial support from kind, dependable donations. Yet, doing so could permit a rabbinical student to opt out of meeting the State’s requirements, and instead meet the requirements of a rabbinic program designed entirely and mutually by the student and that student’s individually hand-picked team of rabbinic mentors. And still, there are other methods by which we can work towards

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incorporating some of that idealism into a 5-year education (or however long it may take).

I recommend that those with the power to rebuild rabbinical education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century do design programs that attempt to cap near the minimum the number of credit hours necessary per semester in order to meet whatever accreditation standards permit the school to be supported as needed by federal financial aid. Beyond that, I suggest that there be an overlay of personally customized training goals that students and rabbinic teachers can set together. I would like to suggest that rabbinical schools should view their curricula's academic cores as a lead melody that all students must sing, but students and their mentors must work collaboratively and creatively to arrange a suitable orchestration to accompany the song of a rabbinic education. The number of musical arrangements that can be composed around a single melody is infinite, and a good jazz musician also knows how to make slight strategic adjustments to a melody, to make the melody more moving in surprising ways, yet still recognizable.

I sometimes wonder if the number of required academic courses I have taken in my time in Rabbinical School exceeds the number of academic courses required by New York State,<sup>6</sup> especially since the State is not the authority who ordains new

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<sup>6</sup> As of this writing, JTS' Graduate School often requires 30 academic credits directly related to the MA, plus the fulfillment of (or the demonstration of proficiency in) several prerequisites, and attendance at a special seminar for first-year graduate students during their first semester. Other requirements might ensue, including comprehensive exams or another form of standard test or project that summatively concludes the student's work towards the MA. The totality of this work towards the



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rabbis. I speculate that, with fewer academic credits than I will have completed by May 2015, my peers and I would still have acquired a different, but still deeply meaningful rabbinic education that echoes the lessons of several years' worth of wisdom.

So, the question remains: What should surround that enduring academic nucleus? Some students have told me that they want more time studying rabbinic texts in the *beit midrash* (house of study). Others seek the interpersonal intelligence attained when studying for a MSW. Still others strive mastering a Jewish artistic practice, or honing their skills in a Jewish craft. From an academic center, a variety of divergent rabbinic paths naturally emerges.

JTS students typically choose a MA concentration from either the Graduate School or the Davidson School of Education, a Masters in Sacred Music, or a Certificate in Pastoral Care and Counseling. I propose that rabbinical schools continue to move in this direction of inviting students to be partners in designing their course of study—especially in expanding this educational direction beyond the formal walls of the academic institution.

First, I'd like mentors and students to determine a vocational path for a student. Is this a student who would like to concentrate on training for a synagogal

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MA could be completed over the course of two years' time. Meanwhile, during the past 8 years during which I have been a student of some form at JTS (where I was an undergraduate), it has been a reasonable expectation that—with the possible exception of slightly smaller course-loads usually during the penultimate or final years of rabbinical school—full-time rabbinical students could be expected to be enrolled in approximately 18 credits per semester while possibly fulfilling the requirements of a field rotation or other professional work.

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rabbinate? For a job in Jewish education? Chaplaincy? An academic career? The intellect of the *beit midrash*? The pursuit of justice? How about organizational and administrative skills? I would like to refer these potential paths for a rabbinic education as *Darkhey Torah* (“the paths of *Torah* [i.e. study]”). I do not expect that every rabbinical student will know throughout one’s schooling (or even at the end of one’s schooling) what sort of rabbinate to expect upon graduation. But I believe that having the student decide together with rabbinic mentors how best to be educated for any of the aforementioned *Darkhey Torah* (or a hodgepodge of the above, or even another *Derekh Torah*—“path of *Torah*”) can increasingly help students see a positive correlation between their studies and their prospective careers.

Beyond a *Derekh Torah*, I would love to see a world in which rabbis each can offer a handy—and unique—answer when asked, “What do you do?” I want to see rabbis who are a whole range of experts. I like to envision rabbis who are adept at a social trade: chaplaincy, counseling, spiritual direction, life coaching, or *shadkhanut* (match-making). I hope to see rabbis who use their hands for the craftwork of Jewish ritual culture: the architecture of *mikva’ot* (ritual baths), the precisions of *milah* (circumcision), the art of ethical *shechitah* (ritual slaughtering of animals), *soferut* (scribal arts). I look forward to seeing a class of rabbis who revive Jewish artistic culture: *maggidim* (Jewish storytellers), *payyotanim* (liturgical poets), Jewish arts curators, Jewish songleaders, Jewish culinary artists. And I want to see rabbis emerge well-versed in highly technical subjects: *hashgachah* (Kosher supervisory), earning a MBA, intense familiarity with a particular Jewish literary genre, or a talent

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for *pesikat halakhah* (the rendering of *Halakhic* decisions). For this category, I would recommend the terminology of “trade tracks” in English, or, in Hebrew, *Mesillot Mumechiyyut* (“Ways of Expertise”). Advantages of rabbis being trained in *Mesillot Mumechiyyut* are at least twofold. First, several of these trades are trades over which Orthodox Judaism currently holds near-monopolies (*shechitah*, *soferut*, the operation of *mikve'ot*, *pesikat halakhah*, etc.). The expansion of these trades beyond Orthodoxy can help create a more multifaceted Jewish world. Second, many (though not necessarily all) of these trades provide services that are somewhat profitable (especially if marketed the right way). During hard economic times, and due to a variety of personal circumstances that arise, five years of rabbinical school cannot guarantee eternal job security—especially for a job rooted exclusively in old models of the rabbinate. It can only come to a rabbi’s advantage to have mastered a trade outside of that which could be identified heretofore as something that only a rabbi would do. Though many of the great rabbis of old earned livings outside of their exclusively rabbinic endeavors,<sup>7</sup> we need not ask rabbis today to earn money outside of rabbinic work; we can widen our net and rethink what the daily work of a rabbi can look like.

I write all of this from the vantage point of a rabbinic student who has spent about a decade at JTS, spoken at length with students from other rabbinical schools, ruminated at length on the benefits and disadvantages of different rabbinical

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<sup>7</sup> Rav Chiyya bar Yosef sold salt (Babylonian Talmud, *Bava Metzi'a* 48b), Rav Huna was a farm laborer (*Ketubbot* 105a), and the legend goes that Rashi was a winemaker.

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programs' curricula, but never had the experience of serving as an administrator or a full-time rabbi. Though I am not unusually "qualified" to think through an ideal curriculum, I have nonetheless attempted to assemble what an ideal rabbinical school curriculum might look like, if (almost) everything I have heard or considered could somehow add up. In some ways, the resultant curriculum is not all that different from the curriculum of which I have been privileged to be a part at JTS, and in other ways JTS and this vision differ dramatically.

The following outline is an attempt at constructing what might have been an ideal rabbinic program for me and hopefully for others, to intensify the student's focus on certain subjects and skillsets: perhaps permitting every rabbinical student to answer without hesitation, "What can you do that no one else can?"

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Though rabbinical students may be united in pursuing the same title (“Rabbi”), and they may all say they want to make lives of Torah more easily accessible to others, those who study to become rabbis differ dramatically from one another. Every rabbinical student set foot onto a path of rabbinic education carrying different personal stories, different beliefs, different strengths, different weaknesses, different intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, different spiritual and aesthetic sensibilities, different learning styles, different motivations, and different goals.

It is said that the Torah has 70 faces (*shiv'im panim*).<sup>8</sup> Just when we think we can encounter God face-to-face through the veil of the Jewish life we have chosen, we discover that we could have enlivened a different Judaism and still encountered the veiled countenance of the Divine. More simply: There is more than one way to be Jewish. When it comes to over 90% of Jewish practice, we can find no singularly correct answer that applies to all Jews. It might be obvious that Jews differ on their understanding of what constitutes work or rest in making Shabbat a day of rest, and Jews will differ on the minutiae of proper prayer etiquette, and what words we should or should not say in our worship. And going deeper, Jews who have never held a weapon can be quick to forget that the Ten Commandments’ prohibition on shedding blood is not commonsense for all. “Thou shalt not kill” alone feels too broad a law to comfort Jewish soldiers who seek a Jewish military ethic to assure

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<sup>8</sup> *Bemidbar Rabbah* 13:16.

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them that their national service may be bloody but sacred. For one Jew, any blood spilled may be an abomination, and for another Jew in other circumstances, a military strike may be a *mitzvah*. We might not love each of the Torah's 70 faces, but we inherit the Torah in its entirety, and the Torah is now ours to teach as we see most fitting. Unfolding the layers of the Torah in the ways that enable us to transmit most meaningfully that same Torah to laypeople is vital to the development of religious leaders. Rabbis-in-training, including my classmates and I, come from the same starting point (Torah) but eventually go their separate ways. By structurally reflecting both the commonality and the diversity of our paths to rabbinic formation, we can only emerge wiser, better-equipped rabbis.

Below is an outline of the flexibly designed curriculum of an idealized, fantastical rabbinical school, hereafter called "*Shiv'im Panim*." *Shiv'im Panim* is designed to train both a rising sector of non-professional rabbis through the *S'tam Semikhah* program as well as professional rabbis (eligible for membership in rabbinic organizations) through the *Semikhah Mukhsheret* program (the curricular and practical distinctions of which are to be discussed in greater depth below, in Section C). Below, Section A covers the *Darkhey Torah* that would typically serve, over the span of 7 courses, a thematic "Path of Study" for students choosing to highlight different types of rabbinic careers. In Section B, we will explore the Trade Tracks that *Semikhah Mukhsheret* students might select in order to hone certain individualized skills that are relevant to their rabbinate. Section C itself is a complete breakdown of how students will be engaged with new *Torah* throughout

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the ~5 years it takes to complete one's studies at *Shiv'im Panim*, and Section D will touch upon what renders candidates ideal for *Shiv'im Panim*.

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### **SECTION A: Paths of Study / *Darkhey Torah***

Rabbinical students at *Shiv'im Panim's Semikhah Mukhsheret* program select a Path of Study that will help center the student's training. (Notably, the *S'tam Semikhah* students may only select the *Beit Midrash* Path of Study.) A student's chosen Path is not expected necessarily to be the "path" of a student's future rabbinate; however, it is expected that each Path of study can enhance each student's rabbinate and enable students to specialize in varied rabbinic fields.

Students, with the approval of their academic advisor, can substitute 3 of any Path's 7 required courses with courses deemed appropriate for the range of a student's personal or professional rabbinic interests.

The Curricular Schedule Outline in Section C demonstrates how the course of study for any of these Paths temporally fit into the grander program of *Shiv'im Panim*. (Note that the numbers below each of the Paths listed do not intend to imply that these courses must be taken in a certain order.) Courses whose titles might not obviate necessary content are described briefly in footnotes at the first appearance of such course titles.



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### **Synagogue**

1. Theological, Historical & Practical

Dimensions of Jewish Leadership<sup>9</sup>

2. Synagogue & Jewish Community

Models<sup>10</sup>

3. Crisis Management & Trauma Care

4. Disabilities, Mental Illness & Aging

in the Jewish World

5. Survey of World Jewish Ethnicities<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Such a course would explore theological dimensions of leadership, along with crash courses in relationship-building, fundraising, intrafaith and interfaith collaboration, time management, self-care, and boundaries; as well as reflections on models of leadership throughout Jewish history: Moses, the Sanhedrin, the Geonate, the *tzaddik* of Hasidism, and more. Such a course would benefit from guest speakers and field trips.

<sup>10</sup> Such a course would explore logistics surrounding founding and maintaining (socially, financially, spiritually and beyond) *chavurot*, independent *minyanim*, synagogues, JCCs, Jewish day schools, afterschool Jewish educational programs for children, and more. Such a course would explore intrafaith and interfaith collaboration between individual Jewish communal models and other communal models. Such a course would benefit from guest speakers and field trips.

6. Innovation in the Jewish World<sup>12</sup>

7. Elective

### **Education**

1. Crisis Management & Trauma Care

2. Disabilities, Mental Illness & Aging  
in the Jewish World

3. Pedagogic Skills

4. Development of the Human Brain &  
Psychology for Clergy

5. Innovation in the Jewish World

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<sup>11</sup> Such a course might cover populations of Jews whose identities are rabbinically acknowledged (Ashkenazic, Sephardic, Romanite, Yemenite, Moroccan, Syrian, Iraqi, Persian, etc.) as well as people whose Jewish identity is, or has been, contested (Karaites, Samaritans, Igbo Jews/Hebrews/Israelites, Messianic Jews, Jews for Jesus, Black Hebrews). Such a course would benefit from guest speakers and field trips.

<sup>12</sup> Such a course would outline a history and prospectus of revolutionary technological, pedagogical and otherwise practical (e.g. liturgical, communal, etc.) innovations in Jewish history—ancient, medieval, modern, as well as what is being developed, and what is to come.

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6. Moral & Sexual Development

3. Non-Hebrew Language Elective II

7. Survey of World Jewish Ethnicities

4-7. MA/Concentration Electives

### **Chaplaincy**

1. Crisis Management & Trauma Care

1. Survey of Jewish Legal Literature I<sup>14</sup>

2. Disabilities, Mental Illness & Aging  
in the Jewish World

2. Survey of Jewish Legal Literature II

3. Development of the Human Brain &  
Psychology for Clergy

3. Independent Beki'ut Study

4. Moral & Sexual Development

4. Parashat Ha-Shavu'a through  
Classical Commentaries<sup>15</sup> I

5. Creating Mentoring Relationships

5. Parashat Ha-Shavu'a through  
Classical Commentaries II

6. Synagogue & Jewish Community  
Models

6. The Post-Biblical Jewish Canon I:  
From the Apocrypha to Arba'ah Turim

7. Elective

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example, Judeo-Arabic, Yiddish, or  
Ladino).

### **Academia**

1. Survey of World Jewish Ethnicities

<sup>14</sup> Several surveys could focus on  
*Mamonot* (Civil Law), *Nefashot*  
(Criminal Law), *Terumot* (Temple  
Law), *Tohorot* (Purity Law), or *Kelalim*  
(Principles of Jewish Law), from their  
ancient origins through their  
treatment in contemporary Judaism.

2. Non-Hebrew Language Elective I<sup>13</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Classical commentaries include  
works of *midrash*, medieval and  
modern *mefarshim* (Biblical  
commentators), Chasidic and  
Kabbalistic teachings (including  
*Zohar*), and Talmudic and legal  
citations of passages from the weekly  
*Parashah*.

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<sup>13</sup> Options might include languages  
integral for the study of Jewish  
thought and Jewish history (for  
example, Akkadian, Ethiopic, French,  
German, Greek, Latin, or Spanish) or  
languages that have been largely  
spoken by Jewish populations (for

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7. The Post-Biblical Jewish Canon II:  
From Arba'ah Turim to Contemporary  
Jewish Writing

### **Social Justice**

1. Keyruv, Community Organizing & Organizational Behavior
2. Theological, Historical & Practical Dimensions of Jewish Leadership
3. Synagogue & Jewish Community Models
4. Disabilities, Mental Illness & Aging in the Jewish World
5. World, National & Local Politics & Activism Through a Jewish Lens<sup>16</sup>
6. Survey of World Jewish Ethnicities
7. Elective

### **Administration**

1. Keyruv, Community Organizing & Organizational Behavior
2. Theological, Historical & Practical Dimensions of Jewish Leadership
3. Synagogue & Jewish Community Models
4. Innovation in the Jewish World
5. World, National & Local Politics Through a Jewish Lens
6. Communal Economics: Skills & Philosophies in Jewish Fundraising & Philanthropy
7. Elective

### **Customized**

(Exact program to be determined in collaboration with Academic Advisor)

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<sup>16</sup> Such a course might cover current events and political systems relevant to Israel, to the locale of *Shiv'im Panim*, to the students' own areas of residence areas; as well as theological reflections on Jewish activism. Such a course would benefit from guest speakers and field trips.

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### **SECTION B: Trade Tracks / *Mesillot Mumechiyyut***

Prior to ordination, *Semikhah Mukhsheret* students (but not *S'tam Semikhah* students) master one trade listed below (grouped together by category for ease of reading) or another trade of which the student's academic advisor has approved; or have a professional, Masters, or Doctoral degree or certificate in a field approved by said advisor. Certain subjects may require additional study either at another institution or with the independent study of an approved private instructor. If the *Shiv'im Panim* cannot provide adequate related training through its own offering of courses, students may expect to spend 1-3 summers concentrating on this trade. A *beit din* ("court") of 3 faculty members must approve a student's completion of studies for a selected trade. Section C's Curricular Schedule Outline details how training for these Trades may fit into the grander scheme of *Shiv'im Panim*.

<p><b>Social Trades</b></p> <p>Chaplaincy Certificate   Counseling, Spiritual Direction, MSW   <i>Shadkhanut</i></p>	<p><b>Jewish Hand Trades</b></p> <p><i>Mikveh</i> Architecture   <i>Mikveh</i> Guidance   <i>Milah</i>   <i>Shechitah</i>   <i>Soferut</i></p>
<p><b>Jewish Art Trades</b></p> <p>Jewish filmmaking/storytelling/theater   Jewish creative writing   Jewish culinary arts/nutrition   Jewish liturgical arts, <i>Payyetanut</i>   Jewish musicianship, <i>Chazzanut</i>   Jewish visual artistry/arts curating</p>	<p><b>Knowledge Trades</b></p> <p>Hashgachah   MBA   <i>Mumechiyyut</i> in 1 Jewish literary genre (such as <i>Torah</i>, <i>Nevi'im</i>, <i>Ketuvim</i>, <i>Mesorah</i>, <i>Midrash</i>, <i>Pesher</i>, Qumran texts, <i>Halakhah</i>, <i>Chasidut</i>, <i>Kabbalah</i>, <i>Musar</i>, Apocrypha, etc.) or written work   <i>Pesikat Halakhah</i></p>

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### **SECTION C: Curricular Schedule Outline**

Below are five charts: each chart detailing the course of study for each of *Shiv'im Panim's* standard five years of study. Although personal circumstances will find certain students with reasons to complete the program in shorter or longer lengths of time, these five years are intentionally cumulative in their coverage. Students, with the approval of their academic advisor, may be exempt from any required course in the material of which the student has been deemed proficient. Students might therefore complete the program in fewer than five years, proficiency and fortuitous scheduling permitting. Except under unusual circumstances, no student may be ordained from *Shiv'im Panim* with having been a full-time student for fewer than 6 semesters. With the exceptions of students transferring from another rabbinical school who are exempted from courses the material of which was proficiently completed elsewhere, for every two course credits from which a student has been exempt, a student will enroll in one elective course credit, which may be a credit towards an independent study designed for the student's Trade (as described in Section B).

Students will be well-advised to consult regularly with their academic advisor to ensure that they are successfully set on a trajectory of meaningful learning towards a personalized rabbinate. Additionally, it is recommended that students regularly volunteer time during rabbinical school, as a commitment to both *tzedek* (justice) and *chesed* (charity). Separately it is strongly encouraged that students regularly attend therapy sessions, to help students better, continually, and

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compassionately understand themselves and others. *Shiv'im Panim* is able to provide counseling services for students seeking therapy.

Liturgical leadership and handy skills—though occasionally practiced in the series of Laws, Contemporary Practices and *Halakhah* courses that appear throughout most of the schooling—will be covered more intimately over the course of special Workshop days, as outlined below.

*Shiv'im Panim's* program begins in Israel—enabling students, after the Israel year, to reside afterwards in the same locale for 4 years without interruption caused by the schooling itself. The program begins with a focus on daily *tefillah*, and then *kashrut*. While in Israel, various courses will enable students to experience various sites and communities in Israel firsthand. Towards that end, the first year also attends to matters of Israeli history and the religions of the Land of Israel. Students will study Hebrew and Biblical criticism amidst their Torah study. Upon students' agreements to attend *Shiv'im Panim*, the Rabbinical School administration will be in touch with any significant others of students to support them—as appropriate—in obtaining work visas in Israel; MASA or other applicable grants; registration at an Ulpan or other Hebrew language immersion opportunities; and assistance with career placement, financial aid, and medical support.

Students who seek a rabbinic education that results in *Semikhah* (ordination) but no accompanying professional degree (as opposed to *Shiv'im Panim's Semikhah Mukhseret* [“Certified Ordination”] rabbinical students who will graduate with professional degrees for having completed an accredited educational degree, such as

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an MA or MHL) can enroll in *Shiv'im Panim's S'tam Semikhah* ("Just ordination") program, ordainees of which would not be granted permission—and would not be supported by *Shiv'im Panim's* administration in an ordainee's efforts—to join a rabbinical membership organization. Notably, *Shiv'im Panim's* design as such of both a professional rabbinical school and a non-professional rabbinical school, with profound overlap between the two, is intended to fill a sociological gap in the non-Orthodox Jewish world. In 2015 C.E., the population of an Orthodox synagogue along much of the urban centers of the East and West Coasts of the United States can expect to count among its *minyan* a gaggle of ordained rabbis who work in non-rabbinic professions: law, business, medicine, and beyond. The intensive training of, essentially lay, rabbis in the Orthodox world guarantees that Orthodoxy will be supported from the ground up with knowledgeable laypeople. The creation of a rabbinically educated laity outside the Orthodox world can help inspire a new generation of highly Jewishly-educated liberal Jewish laypeople who can be assured that *Torah* study is richest when understood as a communal enterprise, and not an exclusive jargon reserved for functioning clergy. *Shiv'im Panim's S'tam Semikhah* program is inherently designed for people who have no intentions of serving as a rabbi, but who want to deepen their knowledge and share it informally with their families, friends and communities. Whereas *Shiv'im Panim's* ~58-course (~5-year) *Semikhah Mukhsheret* program vouches for its ordainees' membership in rabbinic membership organizations, the *S'tam Semikhah's* ~36-course (3-year) program omits certain courses related to professional skills as well as the academia of Jewish

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intellectual and linguistic cultural history. Moreover, the *S'tam Semikhah* program, in which students do not select a Trade Track, is open only to students who select the *Beit Midrash* Path of Study (described in Section A). Should a *S'tam Semikhah* ordainee decide to continue their rabbinic studies at *Shiv'im Panim's Semikhah Mukhsheret* program, the ordainee may re-enroll at *Shiv'im Panim*, excepting unusual circumstances, only after one academic year since the *S'tam Semikhah* date of ordination has passed. All course credits completed while a *S'tam Semikhah* student had been a student at *Shiv'im Panim* would count towards the completion of the *Semikhah Mukhsheret* program—namely, every requirement from which *S'tam Semikhah* students are exempt (unless said ordainee had, while still a *S'tam Semikhah* student, enrolled anyway and been evaluated as proficient in courses from which the ordainee had previously been exempt). *S'tam Semikhah* ordainees who had not previously studied as part of *Shiv'im Panim's* program in Israel are encouraged to spend time studying in Israel nonetheless at some point prior to their ordination in the *Semikhah Mukhsheret* program.

<b>YEAR 1 FALL (in Israel)</b>	<b>YEAR 1 SPRING (in Israel)</b>
Survey of Torah****	History of Israel*****
Varieties of <i>Tefillah</i> in Israel (incl. field trips)****	Religious Sites in Israel & Abrahamic Faiths***** <sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> To include field trips & guest speakers, including religious leaders of different faiths & denominations.



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Contemporary Hebrew I*****	Contemporary Hebrew II*****
Talmud: <i>Berakhot</i> and <i>Megillah</i> ****	Talmud: <i>Chullin</i> and <i>Avodah Zarah</i> ****
Laws, Contemporary Practices and <i>Halakhah</i> : Weekday <i>Tefillah</i> **** <sup>18</sup>	Laws, Contemporary Practices and <i>Halakhah</i> : <i>Kashrut</i> **** <sup>19</sup>
<p>Over the course of the Israel year, 3 days each semester includes Workshops on leading Weekday <i>Tefillah</i> (including <i>Torah trop</i>). Attendance as learners and/or sharers is to be required for all students.</p> <p>In the summer upon returning from Israel, students are encouraged to complete 1 CPE unit and to fulfill their CPE requirement. This requirement must be fulfilled before the summer preceding Year 4. Notably, the 5-year curriculum is designed so as to provide time during the year for CPE.</p> <p>****Comparable course (independent study, parallel course at <i>Shiv'im Panim's</i> home-base, or relevant course approved by academic advisor) must be taken in its stead if a <i>S'tam Semikhah</i> student is unable to be part of the Israel program.</p> <p>*****Course not required for the <i>S'tam Semikhah</i> program.</p>	

In their second year, students will return from Israel and study at *Shiv'im Panim's* home-base. Throughout this year, students will study different Jewish philosophical approaches to age-old questions about belief, practice and identity. The fall semester will cover the books of Prophets and Writings, and the Spring will

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<sup>18</sup> To cover topics including use of *lu'ach* and creative approaches to *tefillah*.

<sup>19</sup> To cover topics including *shechitah*, *kashrut* for Passover, the categories of milk and meat, and modern additions to *Kashrut*—including *Tav Hayosher*, *Magen Tzedek*, eco-kashrut, and *Tav Chevrati*.

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see to the first of rabbinical students' required history courses (ancient Jewish history) and be introduced to the great project of Jewish exegesis.

As this year may witness students beginning to accept part-time paid rabbinic work, the focus of this unusually heavy year simultaneously explores *Shabbat*, some holidays, and a full gamut of life cycle events. Such knowledge and skills, when acquired, will help students serve later on in different rabbinic roles and help make the rabbinical school education more affordable.

<b>YEAR 2 FALL</b>	<b>YEAR 2 SPRING</b>
Jewish Thought & Personal Meaning I <sup>20</sup>	Jewish Thought & Personal Meaning II <sup>21</sup>
Laws, Contemporary Practices and <i>Halakhah: Shabbat</i> <sup>22</sup>	Laws, Contemporary Practices and <i>Halakhah: Yom Tov &amp; Chol HaMo'ed</i> <sup>23</sup>
Talmud: <i>Shabbat</i> and <i>Eruvin</i>	Talmud: <i>Sukkah</i> and <i>Pesachim</i>
Laws, Contemporary Practices and <i>Halakhah: Life Cycle Events Part 1</i> <sup>24</sup>	Laws, Contemporary Practices and <i>Halakhah: Life Cycle Events Part 2</i> <sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Topics of inquiry to include God, creation, religion & science, revelation of Torah, self & other, gender, and peoplehood. Course will include surveys of various historic and contemporary primers to Jewish thought and Jewish living—ranging from Maimonides to Joseph Telushkin.

<sup>21</sup> Topics of inquiry to include *chiyyuv*, *minhag*, creative spirits, rabbinic identity and authority past and present, and the afterlife. Course will include surveys of various historic and contemporary primers to Jewish thought and Jewish living—ranging from Maimonides to Joseph Telushkin.

<sup>22</sup> Subjects to include *Tefillah*, *Melakhah*, *Sh'vut*, *Pikku'ach Nefesh* and *Eruv*.

<sup>23</sup> Subjects to include *Tefillah*, the 4 Species, *Sukkah*, *Chametz*, and the *Seder*.

<sup>24</sup> To include trips or observations of *berit millah*, *zeved/simchat bat*, *pidyon haben*, wedding, and *sheva berakhot* ceremonies; also covering questions of *kohen/levi* identities and responsibilities, and gender-non-specific birth ceremonies.

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Survey of NaKH (Prophets and Writings)	Ancient Jewish History*****
Aramaic & Old Hebrew Grammars***** <sup>26</sup>	Introduction to Jewish Exegesis <sup>27</sup>
<p>Over the course of the year, 3 days each semester include Workshops on leading Tefillah for <i>Shabbat &amp; Yom Tov</i> (as well as <i>Haftarah/Ruth</i> tropes). Attendance, in order either to learn or to share, is to be required for students in the Year 2 Cycle; however, attendance will be optional for all other students.</p> <p>In addition, 1 day each semester will provide a required lecture or workshop on the subject of social justice. Attendance for either learning or sharing is to be required for students in the Year 2 Cycle; optional for all other students.</p> <p>****Comparable course (independent study, parallel course at <i>Shiv'im Panim's</i> home-base, or relevant course approved by academic advisor) must be taken in its stead if a <i>S'tam Semikhah</i> student is unable to be part of the Israel program.</p> <p>*****Course not required for the <i>S'tam Semikhah</i> program.</p>	

Halfway through their education, students will begin training in certain professional skills of the rabbinate. With homiletics and education fieldwork and

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<sup>25</sup> To include trips or observations of ceremonies related to disunions of partnerships, *levayah*, *shiv'ah*, conversion, prayers for healing, *b'nei mitzvah*, and *taharat hammishpachah*; also covering creative contemporary rituals: e.g., coming out ceremonies, sex-transition ceremonies, etc..

<sup>26</sup> Topics of inquiry to include Biblical Hebrew, rabbinic Hebrew, Aramaic of the Targum, and Aramaic of the Talmuds.

<sup>27</sup> Course to cover the history of midrashic literature, as well as a brief survey of medieval and modern *mefarshim* (Biblical commentators), as well as Chasidic, Kabbalistic, and contemporary Biblical exegetical collections.

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Talmudic studies of life cycle rituals, students will complement their studies from the previous year with *sugeyot* especially focused on marital and divorce law, plus halakhic discussions of holidays not covered during the 2<sup>nd</sup> year. Focusing on interpersonal spiritual concerns, students will study Jewish mystical traditions, focusing on both the supernatural and the personal. Concurrent with these traditions, stemming predominantly from the Middle Ages, come a Medieval Jewish History course and a survey of Medieval Jewish Literature. The latter half of the year will introduce students to elements of the modern Jewish world: modern history, modern literature, and the formation and philosophy of contemporary Jewish denominations.

<b>YEAR 3 FALL</b>	<b>YEAR 3 SPRING</b>
Talmud: <i>Kiddushin</i> and <i>Gittin</i>	Core Elective #1*
Education Fieldwork Seminar***** <sup>28</sup>	Core Elective #2*
History & Texts of Jewish Mysticism & Personal Meaning	History & Philosophies of Contemporary Jewish Trends
Medieval Jewish History*****	Modern Jewish History*****
Homiletic Speaking & Writing In Person & Via Technology*****	Laws, Contemporary Practices and <i>Halakhah</i> : The Jewish Calendar & Non- <i>Yom-Tov</i> Holidays <sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Through this course, each student will work as a Teaching Assistant with, and observe, an experienced Jewish educator in a setting where the educator serves as both the setting's main educator and the rabbinical student's mentor. During this time, the rabbinical student will be expected to teach certain sessions, or parts of sessions, in the mentoring educator's class.

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Survey of Medieval Jewish Literature I*****30	Survey of Modern Jewish Literature II*****31
<p>Over the course of the year, 3 days each semester include Workshops on leading High Holiday services (including shofar blowing &amp; High Holiday morning Torah trop). Attendance, in order either to learn or to share, is to be required for students in the Year 3 Cycle; however, attendance will be optional for all other students.</p> <p>In addition, 1 day each semester will provide a lecture or workshop on the subject of neurotheology. Attendance, in order either to learn or to share, is to be required for students in the Year 3 Cycle; however, attendance will be optional for all other students.</p> <p>*Over the course of the curriculum, 4 Core Electives must be selected, one from each of all but one of five categories: (1) biblical literature, (2) midrashic literature, (3) halakhic literature, (4) history, and (5) professional development. Under circumstances approved by the student's academic advisor, students may select other electives for other purposes, including substituting Trade or Path studies with these course credits and/or time slots.</p> <p>*****Course not required for the <i>S'tam Semikhah</i> program.</p>	

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<sup>29</sup> Subjects to include *Tefillah*, *Purim*, *Hosha Na Rabbah*, *Tish'ah BeAv*, the Three Weeks, minor fast days, the *Sefirah*, and Israeli national holidays.

<sup>30</sup> Including Medieval Hebrew rhymed prose narrative, *piyyut*, and secular poetry.

<sup>31</sup> Course to cover *Haskalah* literature, Zionist Hebrew poetry & fiction, Yiddish poetry & fiction, and Jewish poetry & fiction in English.

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**In their fourth year**, rabbinical students will study the High Holidays and—having studied life cycle events and all the remaining holidays—will be able to take on most tasks asked of a year-round synagogue rabbi. Students will begin taking electives of their choosing, in accordance with the Paths and Trades selected for their studies.

<b>YEAR 4 FALL</b>	<b>Year 4 SPRING</b>
Synagogue Internship Seminar I*****	Synagogue Internship Seminar II*****
Core Elective #3*	Core Elective #4*
Path Course #1**	Path Course #2**
Talmud: <i>Rosh Hashanah</i> and <i>Yoma</i> *****	Path Course #3**
Laws, Contemporary Practices and <i>Halakhah</i> : High Holidays***** <sup>32</sup>	Path Course #4**
Trade Course #1***	Trade Course #2***
<p>Over the course of the year, 3 days each semester include Workshops on leading non-Yom Tov holiday services (including Esther and Eikhah tropes). Attendance, in order either to learn or to share, is to be required for students in the Year 4 Cycle; however, attendance will be optional for all other students.</p> <p>In addition, 1 day each semester will provide a required Lecture or Workshop on the subject of interfaith and/or interdenominational work. Attendance, in order either to learn or to share, is to be required for students in the Year 4 Cycle; however, attendance will be optional for all other students.</p>	

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<sup>32</sup> Subjects to include *tefillah*, *shofar*, *Tashlikh*, *Teshuvah*, *Aseret Yemei Teshuvah*, and *Kol Nidrei*.

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\*Over the course of the curriculum, 4 Core Electives must be selected, one from each of all but one of five categories: (1) biblical literature, (2) midrashic literature, (3) halakhic literature, (4) history, and (5) professional development. Under circumstances approved by the student's academic advisor, students may select other electives for other purposes, including substituting Trade or Path studies with these course credits and/or time slots.

\*\* Students may forego the slots set aside for Path Courses if such students have completed, or plan to fulfill, these Path requirements at another time. Note that students, for example, pursuing a MA will require more time-slots than currently allotted for Path Courses over the course of each semester. Meanwhile many other students will be able to fulfill their Path requirements over the course of the time set aside for Path electives.

\*\*\*Students may forego the slots set aside for Trade Courses if such students have completed, or plan to fulfill, these Trade requirements at another time. Note that students, for example, pursuing a MA will require more time-slots than currently allotted for Trade Courses over the course of each semester. Meanwhile other students may be able to fulfill their Trade requirements over the course of the time set aside for Trade Courses. Note that *S'tam Semikhah* students do not take Trade Courses.

\*\*\*\*\*Course not required for the *S'tam Semikhah* program.

\*\*\*\*\*Comparable course (independent study, parallel course at *Shiv'im Panim's* home-base, or relevant course approved by academic advisor) may be taken in its

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stead if a *S'tam Semikhah* student intends to graduate after 3, rather than 5, years of study at *Shiv'im Panim*.

**Nearing graduation**, rabbinical students will become teachers and will study modern issues of *Halakhah*. Students will study philosophies and approaches to communal and personal development, and complete their studies of their personally chosen Paths and Trades. The final semester is designed to be a lighter load for students who are interviewing for new positions, who are writing theses, or who may have otherwise remaining academic responsibilities for their rabbinic studies.

<b>YEAR 5 FALL</b>	<b>YEAR 5 SPRING</b>
Trade Course #3***	Graduating Seminar*****
Trade Course #4***	Trade Course #5***
Responsa & Halakhic Vacuums***** <sup>33</sup>	Trade Course #6***
Moral Development & Jewish Ethics*****	Path Course #7**
Path Course #5**	
Path Course #6**	
<p>Over the course of the year, 3 days each semester include workshops on tying <i>tzitzit</i> and <i>tefillin</i> knots, and other handy trades. Attendance, in order either to learn or to share, is to be required for students in the Year 5 Cycle; however, attendance will be optional for all other students.</p>	

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<sup>33</sup> Topics of inquiry to include both a review of rabbinic responsa throughout the ages as well as questions regarding Jewish thought or action that are not yet answered in rabbinic legal literature.



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During this year, students are expected to deliver a Senior *D'rashah* or equivalent form of offering personalized Torah with a *chiddush* in a format in accordance with a potential career Path (i.e. *shi'ur*, theatrical play, original song cycle, etc.).

In addition, 1 day each semester will provide a required Lecture or Workshop on the subject of meditation and contemplative rituals (emphasizing rituals outside of the exclusively Jewish realm: i.e. yoga, chanting, expectant waiting, etc.).

Attendance, in order either to learn or to share, is to be required for students in the Year 2 Cycle; however, attendance will be optional for all other students.

\*\* Students may forego the slots set aside for Path Courses if such students have completed, or plan to fulfill, these Path requirements at another time. Note that students, for example, pursuing a MA will require more time-slots than currently allotted for Path Courses over the course of each semester. Meanwhile many other students will be able to fulfill their Path requirements over the course of the time set aside for Path electives.

\*\*\*Students may forego the slots set aside for Trade Courses if such students have completed, or plan to fulfill, these Trade requirements at another time. Note that students, for example, pursuing a MA will require more time-slots than currently allotted for Trade electives over the course of each semester. Meanwhile other students may be able to fulfill their Trade requirements over the course of the time set aside for Trade electives. Note that *S'tam Semikhah* students do not take Trade Courses.

\*\*\*\*\*Course not required for the *S'tam Semikhah* program.

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\*\*\*\*\*Comparable course (independent study, parallel course at *Shiv'im Panim's* home-base, or relevant course approved by academic advisor) may be taken in its stead if a *S'tam Semikhah* student intends to graduate after 3, rather than 5, years of study at *Shiv'im Panim*.

### **SECTION D: Admissions Requirements**

Prior to acceptance, students must demonstrate their ability to read *Torah* and *Haftarah*, as well as to lead weekday tefillah. Students are required at least one year of a yeshivah-style education with Talmud (or 1 year's worth of college-level Talmud study), with the ability to decipher Rashi script, before acceptance to the program. *Shiv'im Panim* shall provide, or collaborate with, a yeshivah-style learning program in which prospective students or conditionally accepted rabbinical students may enroll for at least 1 year prior to acceptance into the rabbinical school. The purpose of this year of preparatory education is to increase familiarity with classical Rabbinic argumentation, topics, laws and language, plus Hebrew and Aramaic grammar and vocabulary. Although not required, it is recommended that students have worked in a field not related exclusively to the Jewish world for at least one year prior to entering The Rabbinical School.

Students must act ethically and make Jewishly informed decisions about their speech patterns (i.e. *hakkarat hattov*—acknowledging the good—and *shemirat halashon*—guarding one's tongue—etc.) and human behavior. Moreover, students must express their personal commitment to Jewish continuity. Students must have

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observed Shabbat, have kept kosher and have had a daily-regulated relationship with prayer for at least 1 full year prior to acceptance to *Shiv'im Panim*, and must continue to do so regularly during their schooling.