



Dear Adath Israel Congregants,

Looking for a new rabbi? Adath Israel will soon be following the standard process established for the Jewish Conservative movement for member congregations to identify and select a new rabbi who best fits the congregation's goals, character and culture. This process for matching rabbis and congregations is described below, and is most likely to lead to a new rabbi in place for our synagogue by July 2010.

Given this timeframe, Adath Israel of course is fortunate that Rabbi Robert Rubin will continue to lead us from the pulpit for the current synagogue year, and that Rabbi Steven Wernick, who has moved to his new leadership position with the United Synagogue for Conservative Judaism, will be with us on the bimah through the fall holidays. The timeframe also provides synagogues like Adath with an opportunity to reflect on its philosophies as a community. Indeed, Adath Israel has plans to use this opportunity to evaluate its practices and directions in conjunction with choosing a new spiritual leader.

Helping to administer this rabbinic transition process throughout North America is the Joint Commission on Rabbinic Placement, headquartered in New York City. The Joint Commission is a partnership among United Synagogue (as the national organization for Conservative congregations); the Rabbinical Assembly (as the national organization for Conservative rabbis); and the Jewish Theological Seminary and the Ziegler School at the University of Judaism (the two primary institutions which educate and train Conservative rabbis). The Joint Commission helps manage the rabbinic placement process primarily by administering a uniform clearinghouse that identifies, provides information about, and helps match rabbis who are eligible for placement with Conservative congregations searching for a new rabbi.

Under this system, each eligible rabbinic candidate interested in being considered for Adath Israel's pulpit submits his or her application through the Joint Commission. As a Conservative congregation in good standing, Adath Israel considers only those candidates whose applications have been submitted through the Joint Commission. To be eligible to apply, a rabbi must be a member in good standing with the Rabbinical Assembly and (for a congregation Adath Israel's size) must be a practicing rabbi with at least five years experience by the time he or she would assume the new position. The Joint Commission lists an open position in a variety of publications and clearinghouse sites for Rabbinical Assembly members, forwards all applications from eligible candidates to the congregations engaged in the search, and provides advice and guidance to help each step of the transition process progress smoothly.

Adath Israel successfully used these procedures seven years ago in working with the Joint Commission to retain Rabbi Wernick, and plans to follow the same course for the present rabbinic transition. Under the synagogue's by-laws, the congregation elects a new rabbi by majority vote at a meeting of the entire membership to consider the recommendation of its Board of Directors.



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A number of volunteers have stepped forward in various roles to help the congregation make an educated choice for a spiritual leader. The volunteer groups that have been formed are:

- **Rabbi Search Advisory Council** will provide advice and support to the process.
- **Research Team** chaired by **Claudia Figelman**. The Research Team will be gathering information through a variety of means, including a congregation-wide survey, not only to help identify the traits in a rabbi that are most important to our members, but also on the direction and priorities they would like to see the synagogue and a new rabbi pursue.
- **Communications Team** chaired by **Bonnie Golub** to help keep the congregation informed of plans for and progress on the transition process.
- **Hospitality Team** chaired by **David Oser** to help the congregation host the top rabbi candidates and their families on weekend visits to meet with the congregation.
- **Rabbi Transition Management Committee** co-chaired by past AI presidents **Jonathan Schiffman** and **Glenn Unterberger** will work with the Joint Commission, screen resumes, conduct initial interviews, and coordinate the various transition teams to help Adath Israel identify, evaluate and choose from the top rabbinical candidates.

The Joint Commission emphasizes the importance of conducting a thoughtful rabbinical transition process, providing meaningful opportunities for broad membership participation. Such an effort calls for investment of considerable time and effort to maximize the chances for making a long-term, successful match between rabbi and congregation. There is no prescribed timetable for moving from start to completion of a rabbi search, but the process may very well proceed on a schedule such as the following, which largely applied in the AI search leading to the selection of Rabbi Wernick.

Summertime	Survey membership. Complete and submit application to Joint Commission describing its practices and philosophies for potential candidates. Joint Commission lists and publicizes the vacancy.
September	Quiet time- rabbis are busy with the High Holy Days.
October	The resumes start arriving en masse.
November-December	Screen resumes. Conduct initial interviews. Observe selected candidates in action where feasible. Check references.
December-February	Host weekend visits at Adath Israel for “finalist” candidates and their families.
February-April	Final vetting of recommendation(s) through AI officers and Board of Directors. The congregation votes on the Board’s recommendation.
July 1	Newly-elected rabbi assumes official duties.

The process for selecting a new rabbi for Adath Israel is intended to be thoughtful and thorough, to give the congregation a chance to consider collectively its own goals and philosophies. The recruiting and selection process generally takes about a year to complete to come up with the best match for rabbi and congregation. Adath Israel not only has to decide which candidate it believes is best for the congregation, but it has to convince the candidate that Adath Israel is the right place for that rabbi. Please keep an eye out in the coming weeks and months for information on the progress of this transition, and for opportunities to participate and contribute your thoughts.

Very Truly Yours,

Jonathan Schiffman  
Glenn Unterberger

