This is an approximation: I will send each Shanah Hai student the up-to-date draft at the beginning of January 2015

RB-PRAC 510  
SEMINAR IN RABBINIC LEADERSHIP  
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Thursdays, 11:30 am -1: PM  
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GOALS:

The goal of this course is to help you think about and develop your capacity to lead as a rabbi. Rooted in ideas about rabbis as leaders, it is about widening your perspectives and developing your skills. This is because action and ideas are linked: how people think about leading frames how they understand a situation and this, in turn, determines what they do.

The course is then framed by theory but is about practice, specifically the challenges and opportunities that rabbis face as they try to teach, guide, influence and lead groups and individuals. Recognizing and questioning your own assumptions about what it means to lead, considering and analyzing different approaches, looking at alternatives and pondering possibilities is the essence of what we will be doing. It is through informed analysis and discussion that various skills will be presented and perspectives developed.

ASSUMPTIONS:

The course is rooted in several assumptions:

1. Context IS important, specifically three overlapping and inter-related domains:
   - Your own values, concerns, strengths, challenges, aspirations, fears—all you bring to a setting in which you will lead others;
   - The setting (specifically Jewish not-for-profit religious, cultural and/or educational organizations): reading its culture, understanding the players and their concerns, recognizing the challenges and strength the group and/or organization face as well as the environment in which it operates;
   - The wider societal milieus in which rabbis operate, including the powerful trends and forces that affect all people and institutions (e.g. economy, psychosocial characteristic, political environment, etc.) as well as specific developments in Jewish life.

2. All this is framed by your ever-emerging vision of what Jewish life could and should be;

3. People can be taught to lead effectively. Talking about leading and looking at specific behaviors that foster leading more effectively is a better approach that talking about leadership as a set of personal characteristics; and
4. **Leading is the responsibility of people at all levels in an organization** and not only of people in top positions with formal authority but can and should be taking place throughout an organization (i.e. you don’t have to be the senior rabbi to make a difference…and if people look only to you for direction then there is a problem in the system).

The specific skills that we will address (this will be modified as the semester goes on and different issues arise) include: defining and using a personal vision for Jewish life; recognizing technical and adaptive challenges—the role of the leader in addressing each type of challenge; defining boundaries and managing expectations (yours and theirs); empowering others while maintaining your own position, knowing about how institutions change and the elements that support positive change; creating coalitions, partnerships and supporters; monitoring, furthering and using the organization’s culture to move a vision forward. I hope we will address ways to “steady the course” and avoid trying to become all things to all people.

**RESPONSIBILITIES:**

1. Come to class well prepared to use the reading material as well as your own experiences in our discussions;

2. Review the material from last year about the Bolman/Deal four frames (and how you “scored” out them as well as Schein’s typology of organizational culture;

3. Prepare to lead part of a session in one class

   I am allotting 20 minutes during each session for a student (or sometimes more) to present on a topic. Suggested topics are detailed under the class session. There is considerable choice: presenting a case, interviewing someone and presenting the results, doing an additional reading and sharing the content.

   If you decide do an interview, make sure that I have time to review your interview protocol before you use it.

4. Do the short writing assignments promptly and thoughtfully. Assignments are described in the syllabus.

   Note that there are assignments due on 2/5 (notes for yourself to use in class), 2/23 (2-4 pp. about a leadership challenge you have faced or are currently facing [preferred]), 3/5 (notes for yourself to use in class about an adaptive challenge), and 5/11 (a letter to yourself about your aspirations as a leader.

5. Let me know if you will need to miss and finding out from a colleague what went on.

**BOOKS:**


3. Other material as specified in the syllabus.
SESSIONS:

2/12  A Model of Leading and the Primary Functions of a Rabbinic Leader
(authoritative/facilitative; tzimtzum in theory and practice)

- Write notes to yourself (that can be shared with others) that describe a rabbi/leader who you
admire; include some vignette/s that exemplify what about him or her is noteworthy.

- Borowitz, E. (1995) “'Tzimtzum': A Mystic Model for Contemporary Leadership” (pdf) OR the
Shma, January 2010 (40/665) issue on tzimtzum and leadership (available on line).

- Read the introduction to Barbara Blodgett, Becoming the Pastor You Hope to Be, through the “Biblical
Metaphor” section.

http://www.amazon.com/Becoming-Pastor-You-Hope-Practices/dp/156699411X/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1390870916&sr=8-1&keywords=the+pastor+you+hope+to+be

2/19  No Class. Please review the content from last year:


- Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal, The Path to School Leadership: A Portable Mentor, Corwin
Press. (This is 67 pp --but is out of print. There are copies floating around the internet. If you can not get that, get a recent edition of the authors' Reframing the Path to School Leadership)

- Your four frame diamond if you still have that….

2/26  Understanding the Culture and Its Implications for Leading Change (rabbis as
holders and shapers of the culture; consider mechanisms for expressing, shaping and
reinforcing culture such as use of:

- rituals (celebrations and ceremonies, rites of passage, and shared quirks and mannerisms); hero-making( role models, hierarchies, public rewards, mentors), storytelling (shared humor, common anecdotes, foundation myths, and both oral and written history), symbolic display (decoration, artwork, trophies, and architecture), and rules (etiquette, formal rules, taboos, and tacit permissions)

- “The Networked Prequel” by Allison Fine (pdf)

- Schein on Kurt Lewin’s Theory in the Field….Learning, pp. 1-11

http://dspace.mit.edu/bitstream/handle/1721.1/2576/SWP-3821-32871445.pdf

- Note key levers for culture change (from http://view.exacttarget.com/ffcb10-fc911d737663007f77-fe551c72706d06797013-fe0c157506602

Student Presentation (Shoshana): Do a cultural analysis of the site of your leadership challenge.
Share the artifacts and your thinking about the underlying, espoused values. Hypothesize about the
underlying assumptions embedded in the organization. You can choose to engage us as part of the
exploration or present the results of your own exploration to us. Model this on the approach that
Schein developed. (Refer to the approach we used last year; it can be easily found in Schein (2009). *The Corporate Culture Survival Guide.* Jossey-Bass/Warren Bennis Edition.)


Memo on a leadership challenge you have faced (or are facing). This might be “just” something about which you keep hitting your head on the wall, something you see that you believe needs change, something that has gone awry, etc. Describe who is involved, relevant history, and what the dilemma or challenge is. IF you have addressed it in some way, describe that, as well. Stay as close to the DOD (“directly observable data”) rather than abstractions. If you mention some causes for the problem frame them as possible explanations. You will be using this dilemma at different times in the semester.

3/5 Unique Aspects of the Jewish Not-for-Profit Context and Implications for Rabbis

Non-profits share several characteristics that must be understood in order to be an effective leader: dual authority structure (lay/prof) and loosely coupled components (are considered “non-rational”). In addition there are specific patterns in the Jewish community that affect possibilities. We will explore these and develop a set of specific ways a leader can manage in that context.

- Shevitz (pdf), “Communal Planning in a Nonrational World,” to middle of p.198. (The quality of the pdf is not good; I will have some paper copies available)

- Reimer, Joseph. Excerpt from *Succeeding at Jewish Education: How One Congregation Made it Work* (to be distributed in class).

**Student Possibility ARI LEV:** Interview a rabbi about aspects of the his/her setting that sometimes frustrate him/her in getting things done. Delve into the specifics. How pervasive has this been? What efforts have been frustrated? What has the rabbi done to try to deal with the problem – and with what results. Get as much DOD (directly observable data) as you can – though it will all be second hand, of course.

**Another possibility:** If you have been in a position to observe some things that are obstacles to getting something you can report on that.

In either case make sure you work with data --the reporter questions—rather than talk about abstract qualities. (I will talk more about this in class.)

3/12 Adaptive Challenges and Implications for Leading for Rabbi: Getting on the Balcony

- Read Heifitz and Linsky, 1-74 Questions to consider: (1) in what ways does the role of a rabbi enhance your ability to raise the adaptive challenges and (2) in what ways might you be inhibited or endangered because of your role? Where are adaptive challenges likely to emerge?

- Prepare notes to share in class about an adaptive challenge that you see/have seen in a setting in which you worked/are working

**Student Possibility BECKY:** Present your leadership challenge – how it emerged, who the players are, who is involved, etc. We will use a protocol to help you think about your challenge. After class
prepare a short (1-2 page) outline of what the next steps would be were you able to engage in this work.

**Another possibility:** Look at one or more new initiatives or organizations in the Jewish community and consider the extent to which they are addressing an adaptive challenge. In what ways? How well? From where has the political support come? How was it mobilized?

### 3/19 Political Analysis and Action

Most people who become rabbis and other human service professionals shy away from overtly political analysis and action. Any kind of challenge, especially one that is adaptive, requires political adeptness and adaptability. We will use some approaches that deal with the political side of leading.

- Heifitz and Linsky, pp.75-160

**Student Possibility:** Interview a rabbi who has been trying to get a community to address an adaptive challenge. What was it? How was it raised? Addressed? The benefits that accrued? The difficulties that might also have emerged? What has been learned from this?

**Alternative Student Possibility HILLEL:** Present your leadership challenge – how it emerged, who the players are, who is involved, etc. We will use a protocol to help you think about your challenge. After class prepare a short (1-2 page) outline of what the next steps would be were you able to engage in this work.

### 3/26 Adaptive Challenges in the Religious Arena

- Read Aron, et. al. 1-44, 147-196

- **Student Possibility -- needs two or three people. ALANA AND LISA** Divide the chapters in Aron, et. al. on visionary worship, learning and community. Present how the involved congregations engaged in each of these response to adaptive challenges. What were the challenges? What was lost and what was gained as the congregations determined to move in that direction?

### 4/2 Principles and Practice: TBD (Tentative plans---boundaries in the community, organization and family but open to other content.)

**RABBI VAN LANCKTON : Negotiations and Budgeting  12:15-1:45**

**Student Possibility:** Interview a rabbi about a topic that interests you and is relevant to the course content. Be sure to check the topic with me and to show me the interview protocol BEFORE you are ready to do the interview for my suggestions. Share what you have learned in class.

### 4/9 Principles and Practice TBD (Tentative plan – vision: mine, theirs, ours but based on open to other content. Ed Feinstein article about Harold Schulweis)

**Student Possibility:** Interview a rabbi about a topic that interests you and is relevant to the course content. Be sure to check the topic with me and to show me the interview protocol BEFORE you are ready to do the interview for my suggestions. Share what you have learned.
4/23   Coping with the Perils of Leadership

- Heifitz and Linsky, 163-262

**Student Possibility:** Interview a rabbi about dangers he or she experienced when trying to lead—whether it was in personal and/or professional realm. This can be someone who has not (yet?) succeeded in accomplishing the goals that are desired or someone who has. What did the rabbi take away from that experience that informed later work? Be sure to check the topic with me and to show me the interview protocol BEFORE you are ready to do the interview for my suggestions. Share what you have learned in class.

**Alternative Student Possibility:** Present case of when you have experienced the perils of leading—whether you handled it well or poorly and what was learned from it.

4/30   NO CLASS: School-Wide Day of Learning

5/7    Self Mastery: Useful Strategies and Tools

**JESSICA Presentation**

Readings tbd

5/11   Written account about what you have learned about leading and yourself as a leader by dealing with your leadership challenge is due. More details will be discussed in class.

5/14   Reports on Your Leadership Challenge (1): What Has Been Learned (if we can add some time to this session we can avoid having class on 5/21).

5/21   Reports on Your Leadership Challenge (2): What Has Been Learned

**Memo #2 Due:** Write a memo to yourself that you can read in 6 months and 12 months. What have you learned about leading and about yourself as a leader that is important to keep in mind as you move into the next phase of your professional work? This need not only be about things you see as problematic but can address strengths you wish to further develop, as well. I will comment on each letter but you should do the assignment in a way that will be helpful to you.