RABBINICAL SCHOOL OF HEBREW COLLEGE CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

The core curriculum is built around the two most famous cycles of traditional Jewish learning: Parshiyot ha-Torah and Seder ha-ShaS. The Jewish Living Core follows the order of hamishab hamishbi Torah and, with some adaptation, the order of subjects in the Babylonian Talmud, covering the major areas of Jewish learning central to a text-based rabbinic education. Torah study, including a range of commentaries from ancient Midrash to contemporary literary analysis, links the five books of the Torah to the five-year course of study. Talmud study, covering tractates from five of the six orders, is linked to a parallel study of halakhah. Students in Shanah Aleph (Year I) of the program study tractate Berakhot, the first tractate of the Talmud. Shanah Bet (II), Gimel (III), and Dalet (IV) move together through a cycle of the orders Mo’ed, Nashim, and Nezikin, where Talmud and halakhah classes are grouped by level from multiple class cohorts. Shanah Heh (Year V) presents the opportunity for an advanced Talmud elective. Students prepare for seminars in hovruta diads in the context of the daily Bet Midrash, with help from tutors.

Several other courses are offered each year that relate to the theme of a Jewish Living Core course, offering an integrated, thematic curriculum. These, too, may require bet midrash preparation. In the final two years of the program, students have an opportunity to specialize in an area of Jewish learning or professional rabbinic development.

TORAH

Bereshit (two semesters): Textual and exegetical issues in the Book of Genesis are examined through selected readings in Bereshit Rabbah and other midrashic sources as well as medieval commentaries, Hasidic homilies and contemporary treatments of characters and themes. The spring semester focuses on the literary and historical background of Bereshit and critical theories regarding its origin.

Shemot (two semesters): The Book of Exodus as the national saga of the Jewish people. Selections from Mekhilta and Shemot Rabbah show uses of biblical text in the halakhic and aggadic development of Judaism. Medieval commentaries and modern perspectives illustrate the importance of the Exodus and Sinai motifs in Jewish theology and how the Exodus paradigm has been used beyond the bounds of Judaism.

Vayikra (two semesters): The Book of Leviticus, including themes of priesthood, ritual purity and holiness in biblical, rabbinic and later perspective. Selected passages from Midrash Halakhah, showing the relationship between biblical/priestly and rabbinic law.

Be-Midbar (one semester): The Book of Numbers from critical, classical Jewish, and contemporary perspectives.

Devarim (one semester): The Book of Deuteronomy as a source of Jewish religious teachings and values, including readings from the interpretive tradition.
TALMUD

Mo’ed (two semesters): Intensive study of topics from Seder Mo’ed, including the tenth chapter of the tractate Pesahim and related sources and commentaries focuses on the theme of separating and sanctifying time. The first semester explores the rituals and practices that demarcate appointed times—in particular, kiddush and havdalah, and the role of wine, lights and food in shaping celebrations of the festivals.

Nashim (two semesters): Essential talmudic sources in Seder Nashim, including the first chapter of tractate Kiddushin. Courses comprise an introduction to classical rabbinic concepts, categories and practices concerning the roles and status of women and men. Classical rabbinic sources are read for an understanding of their own terms, and with readings and discussions, as a basis for analyzing issues that surround gender roles in contemporary Jewish practice.

Nezikin (two semesters): Intensive study of talmudic sources in Seder Nezikin, including the seventh chapter of tractate Bava Kamma. Courses explore the rabbinic conception of the human being, the construction of the court system and civil responsibility.

HALAKHAH

Hilkhat Shabbat (one semester during Mo’ed year): The course delves into the laws and traditions of the Sabbath, using Hilkhat Shabbat as an example of how to read and research the halakhic codes, especially those of Maimonides and Caro.

Hilkhat Yom Tov (one semester during Mo’ed year): This course will focus on the festival laws as a means to examine basic issues in the workings and historical development of halakhah.

Hilkhat Aveilut (one semester during Nashim year): The laws and practices of mourning, surveying the essential halakhic concepts for rabbis who perform funerals and guide the bereft through the stages of Jewish mourning.

Hilkhat Kiddushin uGittin (one semester during Nashim year): With a view to practical rabbinic applications, this course will survey the essential rules and regulations that traditionally govern marriage ceremonies and divorces. Based on a groundwork of classical concepts and practices, the course will also consider present-day innovations, challenges and opportunities.

Hilkhat Nezikin (two semesters during Nezikin year): An investigation of talmudic and halakhic sources regarding various areas of Jewish interpersonal ethics, including treatment of workers, property rights, proper speech and other selected topics. In the second semester, students will make the transition from thinking about these issues in the context of the ancient and medieval world to contemporary Israeli society.

MEKOROT: PREPARATORY YEAR

Students who fulfill admissions criteria but whose level of Hebrew is not sufficient to enter Shanah Aleph are required to take a year of preparatory studies. Mekorot students are part of the Rabbinical School community and participate in Bet Midrash and other activities.

- Bet Midrash (two semesters): Complementing formal classroom study, students are paired in beurutot for intensive study of Jewish texts during daily Bet Midrash hours within a supervised study hall setting. Tutors are available to help students work with original sources and to discuss ideas and issues that emerge from text study.
- Hebrew Language (two semesters): Intensive study of foundations of Hebrew grammar and syntax. 4 mornings per week, 2 hours per day.
- Genres and Themes of Biblical Literature (two semesters): Students will read extended selections in Hebrew from the major biblical genres, including narrative, law, prophecy, Psalms and wisdom literature. Particular attention is paid to a thorough understanding of the Hebrew text and to the linguistic and literary characteristics of the different genres.
• Introduction to Mishnah (one semester): An intensive introduction to the form and content of the Mishnah, the first code of rabbinic law. Students will gain familiarity with classical rabbinic syntax, key concepts, and frequent forms of rabbinic teachings, building a foundation for further study of rabbinic literature.

• Introduction to Tannaitic Literature (one semester): Students in this course will learn the skills of analyzing a variety of talmudic texts, aggadic and halakhic. How are talmudic sugyot (thematic units of a talmudic tractate) constructed? What are the recurring technical terms of a talmudic "discussion"? What are the conceptual assumptions of talmudic discourse? What are the social and cultural contexts of the sugyot?

• Basic Nusach and Cantillation (two semesters): Students develop skills needed to lead a congregation in prayer and chant proficiently from the Torah.

• Jewish Life and Practice (two semesters): Students will be introduced to the patterns and essential terminology of the cycle of Jewish religious life and other basic Jewish practices.

• Tefilah Skills and Practice (two semesters): All students in the Rabbinical School will participate in cross-cohort tefilah groups focusing on tefilah as a spiritual practice and technical tefilah skills.

SHANAH ALEPH: BERAKHOT—PRAYER AND THE TRADITIONAL JEWISH PRAYERBOOK
Study centers on mastery of the liturgy: its meaning, structure, history, versions, and laws and customs associated with prayer.

• Bet Midrash (two semesters): See Mekorot year description.

• Jewish Living Core I: Berakhot (two semesters).

• Torah Core I: Bereshit (two semesters).

• Theology of Prayer (one semester) An examination of Jewish prayer in its theological richness and historical diversity. Students will explore a variety of Jewish reflections on prayer, both classical and modern, including teachings from the mystical tradition.

• History of the Second Commonwealth and Rabbinic Periods (one semester) A survey of the diversity and development of Judaism in the ancient world and the events and phenomena that shaped ancient Judaism: the impact of Hellenism, the Maccabean revolt and the Roman conquest, and events of the first century CE—the period that saw both the birth of Christianity and the destruction of the ancient Jewish state, which in turn gave way to the beginnings of rabbinic civilization.

• Psalms (half semester) A reading of key psalms used in Jewish liturgy, including critical method and exegetical insights from traditional commentators. A portion of the course will be devoted to rabbinic use of the Psalter, both for private devotion and in various public settings.

• Hebrew language (one semester).

• Aramaic (one semester). A review of the basic features of Aramaic, focusing on the dialect of Aramaic used in the Babylonian Talmud. Students will learn to take advantage of systematic correspondences between Hebrew and Aramaic by applying their prior knowledge of Hebrew grammar and vocabulary to the study of rabbinic Aramaic texts.

• Tefilah Skills and Practice (two semesters). All students in the Rabbinical School will participate in cross-cohort tefilah groups focusing on tefilah as a spiritual practice and technical tefilah skills.

SHANAH BET
Study centers on Sefer Shemoth and the Talmud theme of the year.

• Bet Midrash (two semesters). For description, see Year I.
• Jewish Living Core (Talmud): See above
• Torah Core II: Shemot (two semesters).
• Halakhah (two semesters): See above
• Liturgy and Poetry: Yamim Noraim (half semester). The classic liturgy for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, including the history of the mahzor and close reading of piyyutim (liturgical poetry). Texts will be taught in Hebrew.
• Theology of the Jewish Year (one semester). Understanding the Jewish sacred calendar both in its historical origins and in the fullest context of later interpretation, from early midrashic sources down to reflections in contemporary theology.
• Rabbi as Educator (one semester). Approaches to adult education in the synagogue and community contexts; supervision of religious education in the small congregational context.
• Classical Jewish Thought (one semester). Concepts and articulations of the nature of God, Creation, and Revelation as they developed from biblical through medieval times, including consideration of rabbinic, philosophical and kabbalistic sources.
• Tefilah Skills and Practice (two semesters). All students in the Rabbinical School will participate in cross-cohort tefilah groups focusing on tefilah as a spiritual practice and technical tefilah skills.

SHANAH GIMEL: ISRAEL YEAR
Study centers on Jewish interpersonal ethics, social issues, and the ethical and moral dimensions of religious leadership. Students have the opportunity to take courses designed specifically for their Hebrew College cohort as well as to study at a variety of approved Israeli institutions. Students are required to spend the full academic year in Israel.

• Bet Midrash (two semesters). For description, see Year I.
• Talmud (At partner Israeli institutions -- two semesters) Students will participate in Talmud courses at approved institutions in Israel, studying talmudic texts in the appropriate seder.
• Halakhah (HC course in Jerusalem -- two semesters): See above
• Torah Core IV: Be-Midbar (HC course in Jerusalem -- one semester).
• Naviim (HC course in Jerusalem -- one semester). Readings in Prophetic literature; the prophets in historical context and as a source for contemporary Jewish values.
• Medieval Jewish Thought - (At partner Israeli institutions -- one semester)
• Israel Seminar (HC course in Jerusalem -- two semesters). A wide range of guest speakers discuss aspects of Israel’s religious, political, social, and cultural diversity in this seminar, with special emphasis on challenges and attempts at resolution.
• Elective(s) (At partner Israeli institutions -- two semesters). (At least one of these courses must either be taken in Hebrew, or must be a Hebrew language course).

SHANAH DALET
Study centers on Sefer VaYikra and the Talmud theme of the year. Students’ professional development training increases as they learn to perform life-cycle ceremonies, and to counsel congregants regarding family issues.

• Bet Midrash (two semesters). For description, see Year I.
• Jewish Living Core (Talmud): See above
• Torah Core III: VaYikra (two semesters).
• **Halakhah (two semesters):** See above

• Modern Jewish Intellectual History (one semester). From the dawn of modernity in the 18th century through the Holocaust and the founding of the State of Israel. Emphasis on the processes of secularization and modernization and the responses to these various segments of the Jewish community. Great Jewish thinkers of the twentieth century; the existentialists—Buber, Rosenzweig, Soleveichik. Mordecai Kaplan; religious pragmatism and Reconstructionism; Abraham Joshua Heschel’s phenomenology of the sacred in Judaism.

• Issues in Rabbinic Counseling (one semester). An exploration of the major components of rabbinic counseling, including listening skills, journeying through lifecycle events and responding to the many challenges and opportunities in the rabbinate. Class will include guest lecturers and skill-building opportunities.

• Rabbinical Internship/Group Supervision (two semesters). Fourth-year students will be placed in internships at synagogues and other Jewish institutions in Greater Boston. Students will have on-site supervision and will also meet regularly for group supervision on campus. Internships are designed to enable students to understand the relationship between their theoretical education and their practical learning.

• **Tefilah Skills and Practice (two semesters).** All students in the Rabbinical School will participate in cross-cohort tefilah groups focusing on tefilah as a spiritual practice and technical tefilah skills.

• Electives in area of professional specialization (two semesters). Fourth-year students may choose to specialize in one of the following areas of professional development: Education, Jewish Sacred Music, Counseling and Pastoral Care, Non-profit Leadership.

**Shanah Heh: Kodashim—Theological issues**

An in-depth exploration of several of the great theologies of Judaism, both classical and modern, provides the basis for students to clarify their own theologies through oral and written work.

• **Bet Midrash (two semesters).** For description, see Year I.

• Jewish Theological Literature (one semester) Zohar. An introduction to the Jewish mystical tradition and the reading of its central text, the Zohar. Students will be taught the symbolic language of Kabbalah and will learn to read passages in the Aramaic original, but also using the new translation and commentary of the Pritzker edition.

• Torah Core V: Devarim (one semester).

• Senior Seminar: Issues in Contemporary Jewish Practice (one semester). Major issues in contemporary Jewish religious identity and practice as observed in various denominational contexts and in current innovative practice.

• Contemporary Jewish Thought (one semester). Jewish theology at the edge of the 21st century; current trends including feminist thought and the recovery of the mystical tradition.

• Seminar in Leadership (one semester). Training to serve in leadership roles in Jewish religious and institutional settings. How to be a leader who carries forth a vision and yet allows others to grow and participate in aspects of Jewish leadership.

• **Tefilah Skills and Practice (two semesters).** All students in the Rabbinical School will participate in cross-cohort tefilah groups focusing on tefilah as a spiritual practice and technical tefilah skills.

• Kashrut (one semester). An overview of the laws of kashrut with in depth study of classical sources and attention to contemporary concerns.

• Electives in area of professional specialization (two semesters). Fifth-year students may choose to specialize in one of the following areas of professional development: Education, Jewish Sacred Music, Counseling and Pastoral Care, Non-profit Leadership (beginning in fall 2011).
• **Rabbinical Internship** (two semesters). Fifth-year students will be placed in internships and student pulpits at synagogues and other Jewish institutions in Greater Boston and beyond. (20 hours/week).

**ELECTIVE COURSES**
Electives may be chosen from among and within the following categories:

*Advanced Hebrew Language and Literature*—Hebrew language instruction is an integral component of the Rabbinical School curriculum in all core and core-related courses. Students are encouraged to choose electives, including Hebrew College courses offered entirely in Hebrew, that will improve their language skills.

*Specializations*—Students choose a specialization in an academic area (e.g., Bible, Talmud, Halakhah, theology, mysticism) or an area of practical training (e.g., chaplaincy, education, Jewish music, non-profit leadership). The academic specialization, consisting of two or more courses beyond requirements, may be pursued either via Hebrew College courses, reading courses with faculty or coursework arranged at graduate programs in nearby universities. Practical area specializations will be arranged through Hebrew College courses, special intensive summer seminars, or courses at other area academic institutions.

**REMEDIAL HEBREW INSTRUCTION**
For students who need additional Hebrew preparation to maintain an appropriate level of text study, remedial Hebrew language courses/tutorials will be required. If a year of such instruction, taken alongside regular courses, does not suffice, a student may be asked to take an extra year of full-time study to raise his or her Hebrew level. (Remedial Hebrew does not count toward elective credit.)

**PRACTICAL RABBINICS AND INTERNSHIPS**
Training in practical rabbinics commences in the second year. Each student is paired with a local rabbi for a mentorship and shadows the rabbi’s professional life, participating as the rabbi sees fit. During the fourth and fifth years of the program, each student is assigned to a supervised internship or student pulpit under the guidance of a mentor rabbi. Students working in the Jewish community outside the formal internship program may also consult with staff for informal supervision and advice as time permits.

**INFORMAL EDUCATION**
Integral to the Rabbinical School curriculum are a variety of experiential learning opportunities that facilitate personal exploration and religious growth. Tied to the cycle of the Jewish calendar, these events and workshops are a core element in the overall course of study leading to the rabbinical degree, balancing academic achievement with personal religious maturation and leadership development.

Informal education includes regularly scheduled *Shaharit* and *Minhah* davening, weekly Community Time programs, a mid-winter seminar, school-wide *Shabbatonim* during the academic year, and special study sessions.