

Leadership and Professional Development

The goal of YCT's Leadership and Professional Development Curriculum is to train our students to be:

- Leaders with a vision for the Jewish community and with the ability to implement their vision,
- Professional rabbis, with the knowledge, skills and hands-on training that will enable them to be highly effective and professional, and
- Empathetic pastoral counselors.

The curriculum consists of classroom instruction, workshops and mentored internships. These components combine to create a course of study that teaches students both theoretical knowledge and the skills to transform theory into practice.

Leadership Development

These classes focus on leadership skills and vision. They are taught by experts on leadership and change from the Eitza Center for Congregational Leadership, Harvard Leadership Institute and by other Jewish professionals, prominent rabbis and lay leaders, and social and political activists. This innovative curriculum focuses on applying the lessons of business leadership to the specific challenges of rabbinic leadership, and, in particular, on the need to balance the rabbi's role as leader with the need for process and consensus. Our students learn to develop communities that are inclusive of all Jews, regardless of sex or denomination. In addition to classroom work, students undertake a year-long project, keep a journal and work with a mentor to experience firsthand the challenges of developing and implementing a vision.

Homiletics, Communication, and Pedagogy

These courses teach students the art of communicating the message, with a focus on drashot (sermons) and other oral presentations. The first semester involves our students working with an acting coach to help them find their "voice" and to become much more self-aware in the work that they are doing - and trying to do - while speaking before a group. The second semester focuses on the sermon itself. Each session begins with an issue in homiletics - either developing or delivering - followed by a second half, in which students present ideas in development and finished drashot to one another, with critique of peers and instructor. At various junctures over the semester, leading orators (rabbinic and non-rabbinic) share their insights on communicating the message to congregants.

Lifecycle Events

These classes seek to develop the skills and sensitivity necessary to officiate at lifecycle events such as weddings, funerals, bar and bat mitzvot and conversions with professionalism and empathy. These classes teach students to integrate the various roles of a rabbi: halakhic decisor, pastoral counselor and spiritual leader. A significant part of this training is the hands-on experience and supervision that our students receive in the course of their internships. Our goal is to train rabbis who can bring these moments alive and imbue them with spirituality, so that all Jews will be able to connect meaningfully and Jewishly to these milestones in their lives.

Practical Skills

Classes focusing on other practical skills teach our students such crucial rabbinic skills like conflict resolution and give them the rules to work effectively with synagogue boards, other Jewish institutions and the press.

Mentored Internships

During their internships, our 3rd and 4th year students have the opportunity to observe and interact with their mentors. These internship experiences enable students to gain valuable exposure to the multi-faceted world of the modern rabbinate as they work closely with their mentors in the synagogue on Shabbatot delivering sermons, teaching, and conducting prayer services, while also venturing outside to make pastoral counseling visits and deliver public lectures throughout the year. Our students also gain experience dealing with the varied administrative responsibilities that come with being a rabbi. All in all, our students' perspectives are broadened by experiencing the rabbinate alongside a seasoned colleague, two of whom being Rabbi Yosef Kanefsky of "nai Jacob Judea Congregation in Los Angeles, CA and Rabbi Asher Lopatin of Anshe Sholom "nai Israel Congregation in Chicago, IL.