



ACADEMY  
*for* JEWISH  
RELIGION

ORDAINING RABBIS AND CANTORS  
FOR ALL JEWISH COMMUNITIES

*AJR Newsletter*  
*Academic Year*  
*2018-2019*

## A WORD FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD



The Simhat Torah cycle of “endings and beginnings” – finishing the reading of Deuteronomy and then beginning Genesis anew – comes within days of our going through the intense period of Rosh Hashanah, the Ten Days of repentance and then Yom Kippur. While our focus is on *teshuva*, repentance, as Jews we understand that *teshuva* involves a life-long commitment to a process, not a one-time opportunity. Daily, we are called upon to be exemplars of *hesed*, loving-kindness, like God. The challenge is to always look forward to determine what is the unique Path of Life that will help us realize our own

potential and thereby act in ways that reflect and mirror God’s loving-kindness. The cycle of endings and beginnings serves to remind us that each of us is called upon and has a calling that is a lifelong process.

For more than 60 years, AJR has understood that its mission is to train rabbis, cantors and Jewish scholars who can serve as exemplars for the larger Jewish community to help people find their own spiritual paths and pathways. We can look back with pride on all of AJR’s accomplishments over these 6+ decades. And we look forward to 5780 with excitement about our growing student body, distance learning programs and our own pathway to anticipated accreditation through the Association of Theological Schools. We look to all of you – our alumni, friends, supporters – to join us fully in these endeavors and to become engaged partners with us in our noble mission and endeavors.

- Dr. William Liss-Levinson

פִּיד יַדְבֵּר חֲכָמוֹת וּלְשׁוֹנְךָ יִרְחִישׁ רִנָּנוֹת

“MAY YOUR MOUTH SPEAK WISDOM  
AND YOUR TONGUE COMPOSE SONG.”

~BERAKHOT 17A

## A WORD FROM OUR ACADEMIC DEAN

On Simhat Torah we begin the annual reading of the Torah, starting again at Genesis. One beautiful part of reading the Torah each year is that while we are returning to the same texts each year, we experience them with fresh new perspectives. As we change, our relationship with the text evolves and we explore new insights that were hidden from us before. This combination of sameness and newness is what we are also experiencing at AJR.

Each year we have new students who join us and add to AJR. While much of our faculty returns each year, we also have new faculty join us and new courses that are taught. Each of these individuals brings something new to our community. Yet, the warmth, caring, passion, and devotion that are the hallmark of our students and faculty are consistent and strong.

We have created new programs, including a track for ordained cantors to become rabbis, and a *Kol Bo* program for students to achieve rabbinic and cantorial ordinations simultaneously. We have a robust distance learning program, allowing students from throughout North America and beyond to join the students on site in our classrooms via their computers.

As things change, however, the vision and mission of AJR are constant. The same devotion to pluralism and serving *Klal Yisrael* that our founders expressed over sixty years ago is still our guiding principle. Our students form a beautiful, diverse community of individuals with tremendous passion for making a difference in the Jewish community. Our alumni are out there having an impact on synagogues and individuals, as rabbis, cantors, teachers, chaplains, and organizational leaders.

We invite you to get to know us better. Learn about our rich history and join us in bringing about the exciting developments that are helping us to grow.

- Dr. Ora Horn Prouser

ALL SHALL UNITE TO DO GOD'S WILL WITH A WHOLE HEART.

ויעשו כולם אגודה אחת לעשות רצונך בלבב שלם





Retreat is one of the times when all of our ordination students come together - both those who regularly attend on-site and those who participate remotely. It is a dynamic experience for building a cohesive and warm community. Almost 80 students, faculty, and alumni gathered together in Southbury Connecticut for four powerful days of learning, singing, and community building. We dedicated our efforts at this Retreat to tackling the timely topic of Gender Inequality. From breaking down the boundaries of sexual binaries to learning about the barriers to gender-based pay equity, this immersive experience challenged us to confront some of the key ways in which our world is both rapidly progressing and woefully static. An impressive lineup of presenters, including rabbis, professors, speakers with extensive background as psychologists and psychotherapists, and the Executive Director of the Women's Rabbinic Network, engaged our student body in conversations about some of the most pressing concerns for emerging clergy.

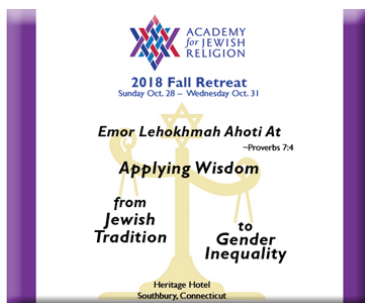


# FALL RETREAT

*Emor lahokhmah ahoti at*  
(Proverbs 7:4)  
Applying Wisdom from  
Jewish Tradition to Gender  
Inequality



Our Retreat offered participants a wide of range of differentiated learning experiences: From an interactive panel on gender and gender fluidity, in which we opened our ears and hearts to encountering the diverse experiences of gender in our world today, to an exhilarating evening of circus arts, in which we strengthened our communal bonds through a physical embodiment of Jewish values. Punctuated by a variety of meaningful prayer experiences, our 2018 Retreat challenged us to think more deeply about ourselves, our relationships with others, and our connection to the Divine.





# SPRING INTENSIVE

Our annual Intensive is the second main event that brings together our entire student body, on-site at our AJR campus in Yonkers. Bridging the distant past and the immanent present, the 2019 Spring Intensive fused a rich harmony of diverse perspectives on Shabbat into Dibur Ehad – one voice. Putting our core institutional value of pluralism into practice, our Intensive featured speakers from across the Jewish spectrum – from non-denominational, Reform, Conservative, Open-Orthodox, and Ultra-Orthodox backgrounds. Through encountering this range of distinct views we explored traditional Shabbat observances together with contemporary visions for what this day of rest can mean for us as modern Jews.

## *B'dibbur Ehad: Classical & Contemporary Approaches to Shabbat*

*Even with bad weather, we were still able to pray together - virtually at least!*



Confronted with severe weather, our second day moved into the digital universe where the warmth of morning prayers and a panel on personal observances shattered expectations for the limits of Zoom to unite us. Concluding with two presentations oriented toward building community through Shabbat, our Intensive came to a close having equipped our students with a new-found appreciation for the power of Shabbat to energize Jewish engagement.





# ORDINATION

In April we celebrated the ordination of AJR's two newest rabbis, Rabbi Gerry Louis Ginsburg and Rabbi Sam Levine. Gerry's seven wonderful years at AJR were the culmination of a lifelong journey that led him to his current rabbinic position at Temple Beth El in Stamford Connecticut. The first graduate of our new Cantors to Rabbis Track, Sam's serendipitous relationship with AJR has fed his profound thirst for Torah knowledge and blessed our alumni with a strong colleague. Together with these two ordines, AJR was proud to present awards to many deserving recipients. We honored our neighbor and friend Imam Ali Kamel with the *Marbeh Shalom* Community Service Award for his impressive work in the Yonkers' religious community. Our very own Cantor Michael Kasper accepted the *P'nei Torah* Faculty Award for the quality of his teaching and the magnitude of his impact on our students. Rabbi Ziona Zelazo earned the Alumna of the Year Award for her continual hard work and dedication, and Arline Duker received Special Recognition for all that she has done for us as she moves on to new pursuits. We honored our *B'nei Mitzvah* Class (ordained 2006) and we were fortunate that several of these graduates were able to celebrate with us in person. Beyond the many attendees from near and far who came to join us in person, this year the entire celebratory occasion was live-streamed for all family, friends, and well-wishers who joined us from afar.





# COURSES & PROGRAMS

## Fall 2018

Introduction to Bible  
 Samuel and Leadership  
 Metaphysics of the Dead  
 Psalms  
 Concert Planning  
*Nusah - Regalim*  
 Responsa  
 Mechina Hebrew  
 Hebrew I  
 American Jewish History & Culture  
 Deep Theological Questions  
 Pluralism  
 Zohar  
 Core Concepts I and IV  
 Spiritual Entrepreneurship  
 Fieldwork Support Seminar  
 Intro Mishnah  
 Intermediate Talmud  
 Advanced Talmud

## Spring 2019

Leviticus  
 Creating Singing Communities  
 Advanced *Nusah - Hol*  
 Intermediate Codes  
 Hebrew I  
 Biblical Hebrew  
 Israeli History  
 Joy and Play  
 Intro Liturgy  
 Mechina  
 Modern Philosophy  
 Bioethics  
 Voice Training for Rabbis  
 Counseling I  
 Meeting Needs - All Learners  
 Reaching Out to World Jewry  
 Chaplaincy  
 Fieldwork Support Seminar  
 Intro Talmud  
 Intermediate/Advanced Talmud  
 Meditation

## Spring-Summer Intersession 2019

Conversion  
 Difficult Conversations

## Summer 2019

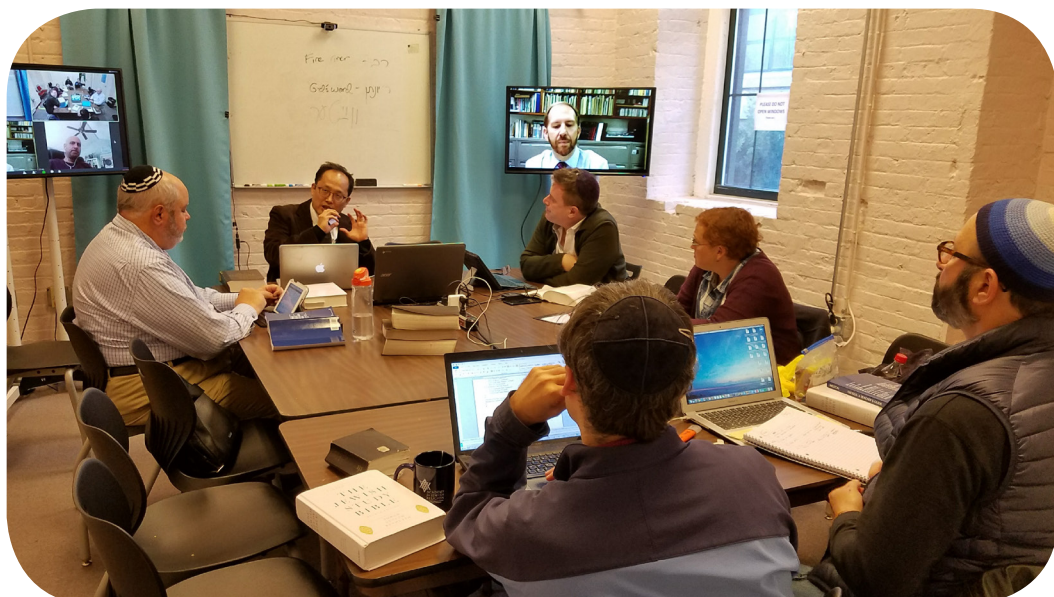
Intro Parshanut  
 Numbers  
 Cantillation  
 Intro to Codes  
 Advanced Codes  
 Hebrew IIA  
 Great Ideas and Debates I  
 Shabbat Liturgy  
 Mechina  
 Personal Theology  
 Core Concepts II & VI  
 Pastoral Responses to Death  
 Counseling II  
 Fieldwork Support Seminar  
 Introduction to Talmud II  
 Midrash: Rabbis & Wives  
 Intermediate/Advanced Talmud

## Summer-Fall Intersession 2019

Teaching Tefillah

This academic year AJR is proud to have offered an impressive array of courses from bread and butter requirements for rabbis and cantors to innovative electives that propel students forward into new directions. Dr. Yakir Englander, who has previously taught at Harvard, Rutgers, and the Shalom Hartman Institute, spurred students to confront life's mysteries in his "Deep Theological Questions" course. Infusing our schedule with delight and cheer, Deputy Chief Counsel Rabbi David Markus taught "Joy and Play in Jewish Tradition," in which students synthesized the professional, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions of their training. Our Academic Dean Dr. Ora Horn Prouser broke new ground with her "Reaching Out to World Jewry" class, and our incomparable Cantor Sol Zim anticipated the new directions of our cantorial program (see page 12) with his "Creating Singing Communities." We also launched our new Intersession Courses with two great intensive classes offered between the Spring and Summer Trimesters and one course in between the Summer and Fall Trimesters. These fantastic options are just the tip of the iceberg!

Our lunchtime programming this year featured "Spiritual Spelunking" presentations by faculty about their spiritual journeys, contemplative conversations about "What Would YOU Do?" when confronted by challenges in the field, and of course engaging Practica by our cantorial students – broadcast live for all of our distance learners to enjoy. From the experiential to the existential, our abundant array of lunchtime programming options help prepare our students for the diversity of their present and future professional roles.





# OUR FACULTY

## Full-Time Faculty



**Ora Horn Prouser**  
*CEO  
Academic Dean  
Full Professor*



**Jeffrey Hoffman**  
*Rabbi-in-Residence  
Director of Institutional  
Assessment  
Full Professor*



**Jill Hammer**  
*Director of Spiritual  
Education  
Full Professor*



**Matthew Goldstone**  
*Assistant Academic Dean  
Assistant Professor*



**Michael Kasper**  
*Dean of Cantorial Studies  
Director of Student Life  
and Placement  
Senior Lecturer*



**Lisa Klinger-Kantor**  
*Dean of Admissions  
Senior Lecturer*



**Sol Zim**  
*Full Professor*

## Part-Time Faculty



**Len Levin**  
*Full Professor*



**Job Jindo**  
*Associate Professor*



**Ilana Davidov**  
*Senior Lecturer*



**David Almog**  
*Lecturer*



**Jef Segelman**  
*Lecturer*

## Adjunct Faculty (2018-2019)

Arline Duker  
Bronwen Mullin  
David Markus  
David Schuck  
Debra Orenstein  
Donna Herzog  
Eric Miller

Geoffrey Mitelman  
Jennifer Shaw  
Jill Hackel  
Marcia Lane  
Naomi Kalish  
Peg Kershenbaum

Renee Holtz  
Robin Joseph  
Rob Scheinberg  
Susan Werk  
Yafit Avner  
Yakir Englander

# FACULTY UPDATE!

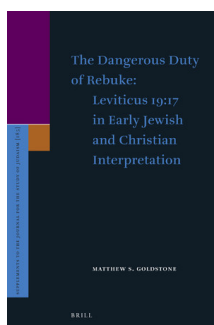
## Recent Publications, Presentations, and Accomplishments for the 2018-2019 Academic Year



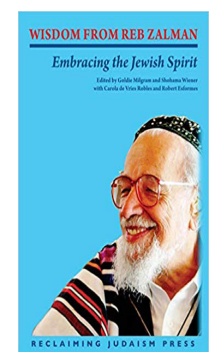
**Rabbi Dr. Jill Hammer** - “When the Mother is Dancing: Maternal Theology in the Volcano Sequence,” in *Everywoman Her Own Theology: On the Poetry of Alicia Ostriker* (ed. Martha Nell Smith, forthcoming 2018); “Goddesses (Judaism)”, *Encyclopedia of Women and World Religions* (ed. Susan de Gaia, forthcoming 2018).

**Cantor Michael Kasper** - Promoted to Dean of Cantorial Studies and Director of Student Life and Placement.

**Rabbi Dr. Matthew Goldstone** - Promoted to Assistant Academic Dean; *The Dangerous Duty of Rebuke: Leviticus 19:17 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation* (Brill, Journal for the Study of Judaism, Supplement Series vol. 185 [2018]); *Binding Fragments of Tractate Temurah and the Problem of Lishana Aharina* (coauthored with L. H. Schiffman; Brill, Brill Reference Library of Judaism Series vol. 58 [2018]); “The Babylonian Talmud in its Cultural Context,” *Religion Compass* (May, 2019):1-11; “Towards a New Understanding of the Defining Features of Rabbinic Midrash,” Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, Denver; “Trauma, Propaganda, and the Rabbis,” Midwest Jewish Studies Association Annual Meeting, Chicago; “Debating the Proper Orientation of the Ethical Self,” “Devotion and Relativity, Text and Context: New Frontiers of Jewish Literacy,” New York.

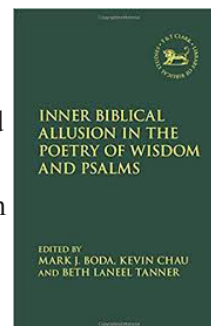
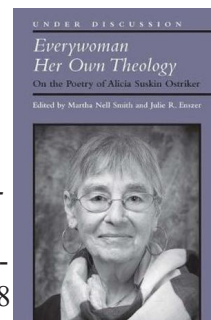
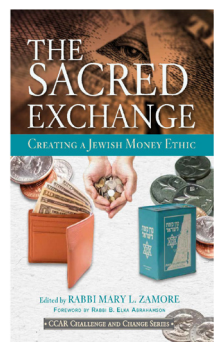


**Dr. Job Jindo** - “Some Reflections on Interpreting Allusion: The Case of Creation Motifs in Isaiah,” in *Inner Biblical Allusion in the Poetry of Wisdom and Psalms* (eds. Mark Boda, Kevin Chau, and Beth Tanner. Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018): 133-165; “On Kaufmann’s Legacy: Its Reception and Potential Pitfalls of Metaphor Identification in Biblical Law,” Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, Denver; “Parashat Aharei Mot,” TV Program: Ben Hashemashot (hosted by Dov Elboim); “Remembrance and Identity: Living with the Dead,” The Beit Midrash for Israeli Rabbis, The Shalom Hartman Institute, Jerusalem; “To Be a Nation Free Forevermore: ‘From Servitude to Servitude’ or ‘From Liberty to Liberty?’” The Havruta, The Shalom Hartman Institute, Jerusalem; “Be Holy: The Living with the Dead,” Nachat Ruach, Shoham; “To Be a Nation Free Forevermore: Reflections on the Book of Exodus,” Nachat Ruach, Shoham; “Doing Lovingkindness to the Dead,” Tikkun Here and Now: Shavuot at Hartman Institute, The Shalom Hartman Institute, Jerusalem; “‘Stirring Sleeper’s Lips to Speak’: The Living with the Dead,” Tikkun Here and Now: Shavuot at Hartman Institute, The Shalom Hartman Institute, Jerusalem, with Shruga Baron; “Is Kaufmann’s Toledot a ‘Jewish’ Project?” International Conference in Honor of Professor Uriel Simon, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan; “Memory, Identity, and Destiny,” Midreshet Migdal Oz; “Prophecy and Mission,” Not in Heaven, Tel Hai, with Yotam Yizraely.



**Rabbi Rob Scheinberg** - “Money and Transaction in Jewish Liturgy and Ritual,” in *The Sacred Exchange: Creating a Jewish Money Ethic* (ed. Mary Zamore), CCAR Press, 2019.

**Rabbi David Markus** - “Vidui: Deathbed Prayer for Release,” in *Besides Still Waters: A Journey of Comfort and Renewal* (ed. Rachel Barenblat). Ben Yehuda Press 2019: 11; “A Most Humble Servant,” *The Wisdom of Reb Zalman* (eds. Milgram and Wiener), Reclaiming Judaism Press, 2018.



# The Re-Launch of *G'vanim: The Journal of the Academy for Jewish Religion!*

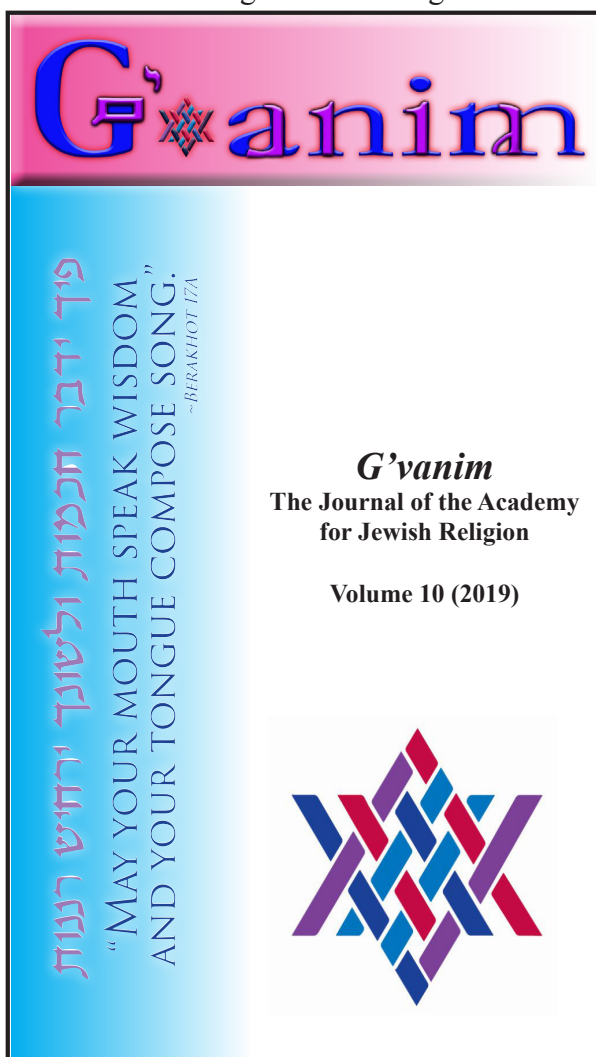
Available at: <https://ajrsem.org/teachings/journal/current-volume/>

In 2005, under the editorial direction of Rabbi Bernard Zlotowitz, the Academy for Jewish Religion launched the first volume of *G'vanim: The Academic Journal of the Academy for Jewish Religion*. Rabbi Zlotowitz envisioned a forum for scholarly and popular articles, as well as more traditional compositions, that consider Judaism in all of its facets from a rigorous and sincere perspective. After nearly a decade of regular publication, the journal was temporarily suspended in order to dedicate effort to the creation of a book-length collection of articles revolving around pluralism. The fruits of this labor resulted in the publication of *Studies in Judaism and Pluralism: Honoring the 60th Anniversary of the Academy for Jewish Religion* in 2015, edited by AJR faculty member Dr. Len Levin.

It is with great excitement that AJR resumes production and dissemination of *G'vanim* as an online journal dedicated to academic engagement with the past, present, and future of Judaism. In order to provide a wide array of approaches, the journal seeks contributions from established scholars, and graduate students, as well as knowledgeable religious leaders and laity. The diversity of voices represented speaks to the institution's foundational value of, and emphasis on, pluralism. Through this publication, AJR strives to further one of its core institutional goals of serving the Jewish community and providing knowledge of Jews and Judaism to

the general community.

Following on the heels of the Academy for Jewish Religion's Fall Retreat, which focused on applying wisdom from Jewish tradition to gender inequality, the present volume assembles a variety of articles that revolve around the intersections between gender, sexuality, and Judaism.



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## Spotlight on a Student



I have wanted to be a rabbi since I was a kid and found joy and belonging at UAHC Camp Swig. For a variety of reasons, I instead pursued a career in public service, first in politics and government and then in Jewish non-profit work, serving most recently as the Chief Financial Officer of Hazon. Yet my yearning for Jewish study and spirituality was not fulfilled by what I was able to do and learn as a layperson. Though it was difficult to imagine such a life change in my 40s, I couldn't help but search for a way to put study and spirituality at the center of my life.

Once I started looking for programs, AJR was the only one I seriously considered. What clicked for me was the pluralistic approach, the flexibility, and the rigorous yet supportive learning environment. Because AJR celebrates creativity and authenticity, values multiple perspectives, and educates its students' mind, heart, and soul, my time at AJR has shown me sides of myself that I had never discovered before - that I am a poet and a songwriter and a counselor and a prayer leader. I have gained knowledge of content and also of self, and this has given me the confidence to not just be a business leader in the Jewish community but a spiritual leader as well.

While I couldn't imagine anything besides returning to the non-profit world when I started AJR, my time in rabbinical school transformed my perspective as to the best role for me in Jewish life. As a result, I am currently the Director of Community Engagement and Lifelong Learning at Bet Torah, a Conservative congregation in Mt. Kisco, NY. In this role, I am helping others to deepen their connections to community, tradition, and their most essential selves, and fulfilling my own dream of a life built around study and spirit.

*- Lisa Sacks*



# THE YUVAL RON CONCERT AND AJR WORKSHOP





The goal of our new cantorial curriculum is to train the future leaders of Jewish prayer in the ancient and traditional musical chant forms, to learn the art of building community through the gifts of music, to raise the cantorial voice in the service of peace and harmony, and to enliven a personal love of the Jewish people.



# Presenting Our Newly Enhanced Cantorial Program!



Our exciting new curriculum includes courses such as:

Introduction to Peace Studies

Community Building through Peace Studies

Music and Conflict Resolution

Sephardi / Mizrahi Maqamat and Music

Empowering Community Through Singing

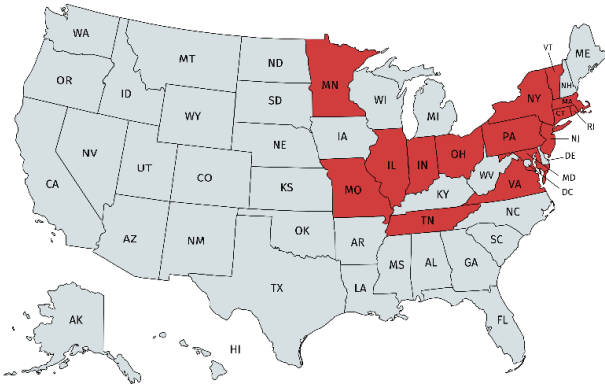


‘Music can pierce  
your heart’

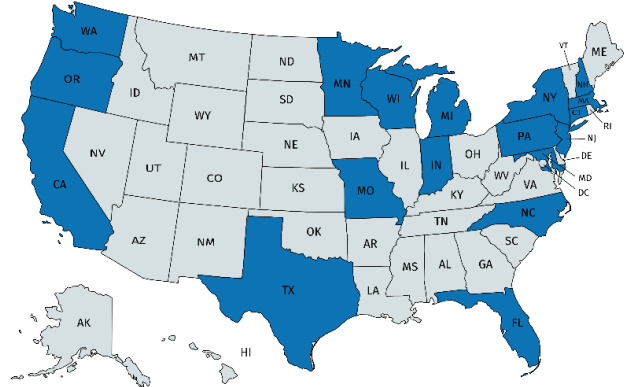


# AJR is Growing!

2017



2019



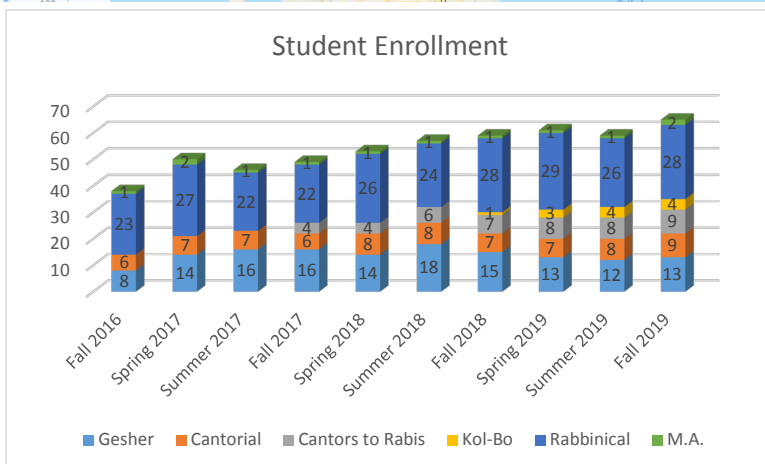
Through the use of Zoom, AJR now has students in 18 States within the United States, as well as students in Canada.



AJR Alumni Places of Work, 2019



Student Enrollment





## *SUPPORT AJR!*

We look to you, our friends and colleagues to support our work.

Partner with us in training the leaders that the Jewish world needs today.

Partner with us in spreading our message of cherishing those we agree with as well as those who challenge us.

Partner with us in encouraging and shaping communities that are built on pluralistic dialogue and understanding.

### **Two Ways to Make Your Donation to AJR Go Further:**

1. **Donate appreciated stock:** If you hold shares of publicly traded stock that you have held for more than a year and that are now worth more than when you acquired the shares, rather than sell the shares and donate the proceeds, you may transfer those “appreciated” shares to AJR. The Academy will sell the shares and receive the current value for them. The gain on those donated shares is not taxed on your return.
2. **Make your donation from your traditional IRA:** If you have a conventional IRA and are older than 70 ½, you are required to take a minimum distribution from your IRA each year. If you instruct your IRA custodian bank or brokerage to make your Qualified Charitable Distribution (“QCD”) directly to a charity, that distribution is not taxable income to you. While you do not get a deduction for the contribution, the distribution is untaxed income.

AJR does not give tax advice and the tax laws are complex. Before initiating either of these transactions, consult your tax advisor to find out how it will affect your return.

When initiating either of these transactions with respect to a contribution to AJR, please contact the AJR office so that we will know how to record the transaction.

