



Guide to Your Senior Year



Dear Senior,

Mazal tov on reaching this stage in your years of study at AJR!

This Guide contains important information about your academic status as a senior and your obligations as an ordinee.

The Guide has 2 sections:

1. Your academic requirements ***At A Glance***, with links to find all information
2. Your Ordination Ceremony requirements ***At A Glance***, followed by more information about the items on the list

Please read the Guide and information at the links carefully, as you are responsible for all of the important and essential information.

It is imperative that you adhere to the information and the dates outlined in this Guide and that you return the signed Letter of Agreement (last page) to sfassler@ajr.edu by Friday, September 26, 2025.

We look forward to working together this year towards your milestone achievement,

AJR Staff and Administration

At A Glance - Academic Responsibilities

Please see additional important information at the links provided.

Note: Please read the Academic Catalog and Ritual Skills Handbook carefully, as you are responsible for all of the important and essential information included in the documents.

Eligibility for Senior Standing

Coursework

- Finish all required courses during senior year.
- Incompletes - Students should have no more than 3 incompletes, and all must be completed before or during Spring trimester.
- MA Project – See Academic Catalog XXI:D
- Comprehensive Exams – Should be completed before senior year - Academic Catalog XVIII:D (Rabbinical) or XIX:D (Cantorial)
- Ritual Skills - see Ritual Skills Handbook

Suitability

- The decision to ordain any candidate will be made by the administration. Someone who is determined to be unprepared will not be ordained.

Timeline

Summer before senior year

- MA Project Proposal due
- Complete all comprehensive exams

Fall of senior year

- Complete MA Project (1st draft due October, final draft due December)
- Complete all ritual skills
- Complete most classes (some may be completed spring of senior year)

Spring of senior year

- Finish all course requirements, including incompletes
- Senior Seminar
- Senior Practicum for cantorial and *Kol-Bo* students
- Senior Legacy
- Settle all AJR financial obligations

At A Glance - Ordination Ceremony Preparation Responsibilities

Please see additional info following this list about documents & information required.

Dates to Note – Ordinees are required to attend the pre-Ordination programs below.

1. Senior Legacy – Monday, April 13, 2026, lunchtime program on Zoom
2. Blessing Circle – Sunday, April 26, 2026 in person at AJR in Yonkers, NY, time tbd
3. **Ordination Day!** – Monday, April 27, 2026 - Temple Emanuel in Closter, NJ, 4 pm.
There will be a walk through/rehearsal at the temple before Ordination, time tbd.

Deadlines/due dates for submission:

Friday, September 26, 2025 – email sfassler@ajr.edu

1. Signed Letter of Agreement / last page of Senior Guide

Friday, November 14, 2025 – email sfassler@ajr.edu

1. English & Hebrew names indicating how they are to appear on the invitation, in the Journal & on the *semikhah* document, can vary on all 3. Hebrew last names are optional.
2. Legal English name for MA certificate, if you are receiving an MA from AJR
3. Title you will use (rabbinical students) – Hebrew – *Rav* or *Rabbah*
4. *Kippah* style preference – regular or *Bukharian* (with head circumference measurement for *Bukharian*)
5. Photo – high resolution headshot is best
6. MA degree (or highest degree) Institution & specific degree, only for students with an MA in Jewish Studies from elsewhere & if you don't own a hood

Friday, January 16, 2026 -- firm deadline

1. **All AJR financial obligations must be settled** - outstanding tuition paid in full or on payment plan, with final installment due on or before March 5, 2026.
 - Senior Ordination Fee – \$1200 paid in full
 - AJR loan repayment plan in place, if any
 - Master's Project Mentor Fee – \$500
 - For students with Federal Student Aid - ***Exit counseling must be done on the ED's website:*** <https://studentaid.gov/exit-counseling/> - Once you complete the counseling, a record of it should migrate into your Populi account. Please confirm with Rabbi David Cavill that you've completed the counseling.
2. **Documents due – AJR has editorial license on all documents.**
 - Bio for the Ordination Journal – 400 words max, first person, word document only
 - *Pasuk* for the Ordination Journal – in Hebrew & English
 - List of *beit din* & presenter for approval – All presenters and *batei din* members must be approved in advance prior to reaching out to them to offer this honor.
 - Cantorial and *Kol-Bo* students, musical selection in lieu of ordination speech
 - Invitation list
 - Robe – Do you need a robe? What is your height?

Friday, March 6, 2026

- Ordination speech – 400 words max / 2 ½ minute; 4 minutes max for *Kol-Bo*
- Blessing Circle Song – to be sung by AJR community during the Blessing Circle

Additional Information About the List of Preparation Responsibilities

Senior Legacy

During the **Monday, April 13, 2026** lunchtime program, all ordinees briefly share reflections about their AJR experience and recommendations for other students.

Blessing Circle

All ordinees must come in-person to participate in a transition ritual in which the community offers each ordinee blessings.

Blessing Circle Song - Each ordinee will select a song (with words or *niggun*) that will be sung for them during the Blessing Circle. This song/*niggun* is due Friday, March 20, 2026.

Walk through/rehearsal onsite at Ordination venue

AJR administration and ordinees will go together to the Ordination Ceremony venue to walk through the *semikhah* signing and Ordination Ceremony. This provides a sense of familiarity with and preparation for the Ordination Day's flow and activity.

Friday, September 26, 2025 – email sfassler@ajr.edu

- **Senior Guide Signature Page**

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Friday, November 14, 2025 – email sfassler@ajr.edu

- **English and Hebrew Names**, can vary on all 3. Hebrew last names are optional.

Your English and Hebrew names will be on the invitation, in the Journal and on the *semikhah* certificate. Please confirm the spelling and submit your full Hebrew name (including parents) and your English name exactly as you wish them to appear on all 3 documents. If you want your name to appear differently on the invitation or Journal than on the *semikhah* certificate, please note that.

- **Your legal name** - If you will be earning an MA from AJR, please confirm your legal name.
- **Title You Will Use**

Rabbinic ordinees may choose between Rav (רב) or the newer feminine form, Rabbah (רבה), as their Hebrew title on the *semikhah* documents. All students will use Rabbi as their English title.

Friday, January 16, 2026 - Documents due, firm deadline

- **List of *Beit Din* and Presenter for Approval**

All presenters and *Batei Din* members **must be approved in advance** by Dr. Ora Horn Prouser *prior to reaching out to them to offer this honor*.

Each senior should choose the four participants (or seven for *Kol-Bo*) in their own ordination. There will be one Presenter and three members of the witnessing *Beit Din*, or two *Batei Din* for *Kol-Bo*. The presenter does not serve on the *Beit Din*.

Three members of this group (or six in the case of *Kol-Bo*) must be a part of the Academy for Jewish Religion community – members of the faculty who have taught at AJR within the past five years, alumni, or a current clergy member of the Board of Trustees.

Beit Din

The members of the *Beit Din* must have received rabbinical or cantorial ordination (or cantorial investiture) acceptable to the Academy for Jewish Religion. The *Beit Din* for a rabbinical student must be comprised of rabbis. We encourage cantorial students to choose a *Beit Din* comprised of three cantors. If a student prefers, one member of the *Beit Din* for a cantorial student may be a rabbi. For *Kol-Bo* students, one *Beit Din* should be comprised entirely of rabbis and the other entirely of cantors (for a total of three rabbis and three cantors). A *Beit Din* member who is both

a rabbi and a cantor may count as one or the other for the purposes of the ordaining *Beit Din*.

Presenter

The Presenter does two things:

1. formally presents the ordinee with their new title -- This role should be given to someone with standing in the Jewish professional community.
2. writes a presenter piece for the Ordination Journal & they should be told that this written piece is required when they are invited to be your presenter

Once your *Beit Din* and presenter have been approved, *you must* invite the people to serve. Once they have agreed to serve on your *Beit Din* or be your Presenter, email sfassler@ajr.edu immediately with the information. Our Senior Director of Administration will then be in touch directly with your *Beit Din* and Presenter to share all of the relevant information & request the presenter piece.

Invitation List

Your mailing lists help AJR determine the quantity of invitations needed. AJR will mail any quantity of invitations you would like for us to send. ***Please use only the template that AJR provides for submitting your invitation list.*** Please include email addresses so we can send an electronic invitation and Journal information. Please *do not include* on your list any member of the AJR board, alumni, administration & staff, faculty or students as they are already included on the AJR invitation list.

Important Note: Any mailing list that you provide to AJR that is the property of your synagogue or any other organization requires written permission from that organization in order for AJR to send invitations to the people on that list.

Ordination Attire

Ordination attire includes a black robe (provided by AJR) and a tallit. In keeping with the solemnity of the occasion and to create uniformity, we encourage ordinees to wear the *atarah* that is gifted to our ordinees by ARC, as well as the *kippah* and *kanfot* gifted to our ordinees by the Student Association. In years when AJR is awarding Master's Degrees, you are encouraged to wear an academic hood from the school from which you earned your highest degree. AJR will provide hoods for those earning a Master's Degree from AJR and for those whose degree is from elsewhere and don't have that hood.

Therefore, AJR needs the following information on or before November 14, 2025:

MA degree (or highest degree) Institution & specific degree, only if you are not getting an MA from AJR

Atarah, Kanfot, & Kippah

The Association of Rabbis and Cantors gifts each ordinee with an *atarah* for your *tallit*. It will be mailed to you, along with a set of *kanfot*, with sufficient time to be able to attach it to your tallit of choice. The Student Association gifts *kanfot* and a *kippah* to each graduating senior.

Please email your preference for your *kippah*, either regular or *Bukharian*, along with the circumference measurement of your head where you will place the *Bukharian kippah*, by Friday, November 14, 2025.

Ordination Journal

The Ordination Journal is a celebratory highlight of the year and it is a time when the talents of our ordinees and the special character of AJR are showcased. The Journal is also a keepsake of greetings and wishes from people who want to honor you.

The Journal serves as a valuable publicity tool and a vital annual fundraiser for AJR. Ordination is your time to contribute to this effort and to help AJR with promotion.

The Journal is available online with print copies available for those attending Ordination in-person.

Ordination Reception

AJR is pleased to provide our ordinees and all Ordination guests with a post-ceremony reception.

Senior Year Inquiries - *Please reach out to the following staff members:*

- Academic standing & related matters - Rabbi Matthew Goldstone, PhD
- Ordination logistics - Suli A. Fassler
- Registrar and Bursar - Linda Ripps
- Placement - Rabbi Beth Kramer-Mazer



Senior Year/Ordination Letter of Agreement

I affirm that I have read and understand everything in this AJR Senior Guide.

I agree to submit all materials by the listed due dates.

I agree to attend the Blessing Circle, Ordination Rehearsal, and Ordination Ceremony in-person.

Signature:

Today's Date:

Please return to Suli Fassler (sfassler@ajr.edu) by Friday, September 26, 2025.