



## Ziegler School Restructures Curriculum to Meet the Emerging Needs of the Jewish Community of the Future

The Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies is proud to announce a revolutionary approach to rabbinic education in North America, responsive to the changing needs of the Jewish community by offering a program that is accessible, streamlined, and laser-focused on training the future rabbis of our community. In doing so, the Ziegler School has created a boldly integrated curriculum, shortened the length of the program, added a year of on-site Residency, and designed an intensive Israel summer program, while also reducing the tuition to make the program accessible.

### THE CHALLENGE

The Jewish world is changing rapidly with serious implications for rabbinical training and the future of the Jewish community. Graduate education is now more expensive, both for students and institutions, many are insistent on a more cost-effective (and condensed) training period before serving. In 2007, five of the liberal rabbinical schools enrolled 100 students in their incoming classes. This year (2022) they enrolled 52. Fewer Rabbis entering training programs and reports of a steep shortfall of rabbis available to fill open positions, puts the rabbinate in crisis.

### THE METHODOLOGY

These needs are too pressing to ignore, and the Ziegler School has devoted the past two years to an intense and extensive process of consultation, exploration, and conversation, both internal and external to innovate a solution to the shortage of individuals entering the rabbinate. We hosted a national Blue-Ribbon Commission of diverse experts to discuss the future of the rabbinate. We also conducted sustained discussions with the Ziegler Faculty Steering Committee, alumni, students, independent focus groups, the Ziegler School Advisory Board, the AJU Board's Committee on Academic Affairs, and the AJU Faculty Senate. The new curriculum distills their wisdom and these deliberations.

### THE ZIEGLER SCHOOL'S INNOVATIONS

Following is a cumulative report of some changes which have already been adopted and several which will be implemented as we move forward:

#### 1. Tuition Reduction

To give everyone access to a great rabbinic education, the Ziegler School has set tuition at \$7,000 per year.

#### 2. Revitalized Israel Programing: Laser Focused on the Land, Language and People of Israel

Currently, Ziegler students attend Israel for a year. The Ziegler School's new curriculum creates a more concentrated program in which the learning and activities are focused intensively on Israel. In close consultation with the Honey Foundation and with our educational and rabbinic partners in Israel, the Ziegler School will now offer a two-month summer intensive in Israel. The Israel program will dive deep in three distinct areas: (1) contemporary Hebrew, (2) Israel Seminar exploring the modern state of Israel, its diverse communities, cultural, political, and social challenges and opportunities, and (3) Biblical and Rabbinic texts especially pertinent to the Land of Israel.



### 3. Residency Year

As part of streamlining the curriculum, the Ziegler School will advance the in-person coursework during the first three years of rabbinic school while reserving the fourth year as a rabbinic residency. Students will be placed off campus in a congregation, school, camp, medical, mental health, penal facility, agency, or some entrepreneurial rabbinic effort. While they focus on practitioner-based skills learned in the field, their experience will be enhanced through online courses that allows students to reflect critically on their experiences in a professional setting. These residencies will facilitate students being able to live anywhere in the country. Their residency is for their final Ziegler year.

### 4. An Accelerated Education

The Ziegler School has now created a new four-year curriculum allowing students to graduate much sooner than the traditional 5-6 year rabbinic programming. We remain committed to in person learning as the only way to foster religious formation and spiritual discipline, to experience the rhythm of life in a Jewish community and benefit from being part of a fellowship that takes mitzvah observance and halakhah seriously. The accelerated pace includes:

- **An Education for Today's Students and Tomorrow's Community**

Courses that train rabbis to discern and teach the significance of Jewish sacred writings to distill their message in ways that will allow people to better thrive and to empower communities to express authentic Jewish values of welcome, companionship, and holiness.

- **Innovative Approach to Hebrew**

The foundation of the curriculum is geared toward mastering classical texts written in both biblical Hebrew and "Leshon Hazal," also known as rabbinic Hebrew. The program is dedicated to providing students sufficient background and competency in classical biblical and rabbinic texts so students may progress more rapidly in both the understanding of Hebrew grammar and its development, leading to a symbiotic connection between Hebrew language and Bible and Rabbinics

- **Pioneering Integration of Rabbinics**

Courses in rabbinics will be less divided by genre; rather, material will be introduced by ideas and themes from within the collective body of rabbinic literature, giving students a broader appreciation of the sweep of Judaism's wisdom, insight, and applicability with an emphasis on achieving a greater integration of rabbinic thought, textual integration, and methodology.

- **Extensive Professional Skills Preparation**

The curriculum will continue to provide focused exploration in the expertise needed by rabbis to sustain and nurture the people and the institutions they serve. Students will develop skills in homiletics, chaplaincy, professional development, and identity, as well as the habits necessary to manage staff, donors, members, and institutions; and the tefillah expertise to lead services and chant Torah, Haftarat and Megillot, pastoral counseling, social action and community organizing, and practical rabbinics.

## NEXT STEPS

We invite you to learn more online at [www.aju.edu/ziegler](http://www.aju.edu/ziegler) or to email us at [ziegleradmissions@aju.edu](mailto:ziegleradmissions@aju.edu). We look forward to connecting with you.