

Aaron David Torop Budman

Rabbinic Experience

5th Year Rabbinic Fellow, Isaac M. Wise Temple, Cincinnati, OH

May 2023-Present

- Collaborate with clergy team at 1,000+ household congregation to co-create worship and education, including delivering sermons, leading services, teaching adult education classes and religious school, and facilitating Torah study.
- Initiated and implemented programming to increase teen engagement for the High Holy Days. Teens partnered on topics, guided discussions, and created welcome bags for immigrant youth.
- Develop weekly lessons for a new 5th and 6th grade curriculum for Kehillah, a re-imagined religious school experience, with units on Jewish history, Israel, and holidays. Serve as the lead teacher for four classrooms, providing support for other teachers.
- Designed new visual *t'filah* slides for Shabbat evening worship to enhance the spirituality and prayer experience for worshippers in person and online.

Student Rabbi, Temple Shalom, Lafayette, LA

August 2021-May 2023

- Served as solo rabbi for a Jewish community of approximately 50 households - conducted biweekly Shabbat services and High Holy Day worship, delivered sermons, read Torah, led multi-generational education, and provided pastoral care to help congregants navigate significant loss, changes in clergy, and generational leadership transitions.
- Taught dynamic, hybrid adult learning to connect Jewish tradition to learners' modern lives.
- Administered a mixed-age classroom religious school program for 11 students, led youth *t'filah*, and successfully wrote grant requests and received maximum grant amount per student to implement a new Hebrew program and community-wide holiday celebrations.
- Partnered with leaders to sustain and grow community by increasing attendance, recruiting new board members, engaging potential members, and supporting diverse membership, including Jews of Color, interfaith families, young children, converts, and those undergoing conversion.
- Mentored students and officiated at *B'nai Mitzvah* and conversion ceremonies.

Student Rabbi, Synagogue of the Hills, Rapid City, SD

August 2020-July 2021

- Served as solo rabbi for a small community, providing monthly virtual visits during COVID.
- Facilitated online High Holy Day worship using videos, music, and other digital tools to enhance feelings of belonging and communal participation in holiday celebrations.
- Translated traditions and pastoral care to digital formats during the first year of COVID.

Jewish Communal Leadership Experiences

President, Rabbinical Student Association, HUC-JIR Cincinnati, OH

May 2022-May 2023

- Sustained an active and vibrant campus community, planned community events, and conducted a full student-body needs assessment in partnership with other board members.
- Advocated for student needs and championed initiatives through events, projects, and other opportunities.
- Directed transition of RSA amid structural changes resulting from the decision to close the Cincinnati rabbinical program.

Eisendrath Legislative Assistant

August 2018-June 2019

Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, Washington, D.C.

- Advocated in Washington, D.C., on behalf of the URJ and its congregations on the Environment, Israel, International Religious Freedom, and Foreign Policy, rooted in Reform Jewish values.
- Created Israel programs for *L'Taken* Seminars to align with the URJ's approach to Zionism.
- Connected with interfaith partners to maximize our impact as faith-based advocates through coalition meetings, sign on letters, and joint advocacy efforts.
- Championed Uyghur human rights advocacy by building close relationships with the Uyghur community around D.C. and facilitating their lobbying through legislative research, in-person advocacy, and digital communications, all while centering their leadership.

Unit Head, URJ Camp Coleman, Cleveland, GA

June-August 2018

Bunk counselor June-August 2014 and 2015, Unit Educator June-August 2017

- Supervised 30 staff members and provided care for 150 rising 8th grade campers over two camp sessions, overseeing day-to-day camper care, supervision, and programming for the unit.
- Supported staff and campers in promptly addressing camper safety, disclosure of sexual assault, counselor-to-camper violence, LGBTQ+ inclusion, and mediating camper conflict.
- Mentored staff to encourage their development through regular supervision and a skills-based evaluation to help staff members articulate their strengths and areas for improvement.
- Coordinated with camp leadership team to inspire a love of Jewish summer camp and create a safe and welcoming environment after the Parkland, FL, shooting in February 2018.

Academic Fellowships

Nachshon Graduate Fellow, The Nachshon Project

July 2019-May 2024

- A project of the Legacy Heritage Fund, the Nachshon Project brings together students pursuing a variety of post-secondary degrees (rabbinic ordination, master's in education and nonprofit management, etc.) to develop American Jewish communal leadership.
- Conducted fieldwork using survey design, implementation, and analysis through surveying parents of the Luria School in Brooklyn, NY, on issues of diversity and inclusion, providing data-driven recommendations in partnership with *Prizmah*.
- Applied theories of innovation and design thinking to ideate and pitch a business idea for celebrating *Mizrahi* identity in the U.S. Worked with a team of fellows, coached by *Clal*, to conduct interviews, prototype possible models, and jointly craft a proposal.
- Taught online three-session social justice elective track for the Nachshon Project Counselor Fellowship in Summer 2021 for a multi-denominational group of Jewish summer camp staff.
- Certificate in Emotional Intelligence from Case Western Reserve University, March 2021
- Coursework in Nonprofit Management and Entrepreneurship at Northwestern University March 2022

The Jewish Foundation Organizational Fellow,

May-August 2021

Jewish Community Relations Council, Cincinnati, OH

- Developed high school curriculum on dismantling forms of oppression (racism, antisemitism, and other expressions of extremism) through coalition building.
- Assisted in day-to-day function of the JCRC, including research and writing policy memos, tracking communications, meeting with core partners, and participating in coalition events.

Weitzman-JDC Fellowship for Global Jewish Leaders

July 2019-May 2021

- Developed relationships with young Jews in Russia and India through facilitated programs, and furthered knowledge of and connection with Jewish Peoplehood.
- Certificate in Foundations in Design Thinking from IDEO, a global design firm

Education

Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion

Expected Ordination June 2024

Cincinnati, OH

Master of Arts in Hebrew letters, *May 2022*

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), One unit, May-August 2022

- Provided interfaith pastoral care at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center, a Level 1 Trauma hospital in an urban area; covered overnight and weekend on-call shifts at Jewish Hospital; and developed reflective and self-care tools to improve pastoral caregiving.

Rabbi Morris H. Youngerman Memorial Prize, for best sermon preached in the Chapel during the academic year, HUC-JIR Cincinnati, May 2023

Irwin Engelman Prize for Leadership, awarded to a male student for significant achievements on the Cincinnati campus, HUC-JIR Cincinnati, May 2023

Atara Merit Scholarship, HUC-JIR, June 2019-May 2024

Abraham and Anna Helman Memorial Prize for Academic Excellence, HUC-JIR Jerusalem, 2020

American University, Washington, D.C.

May 2018

Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with Honors, Summa Cum Laude

Bachelor of Arts in Jewish Studies, Summa Cum Laude

- Certificate in Advanced Leadership Studies, American University School of Public Affairs
- Member, American University Honors Program
- Member, Phi Beta Kappa, Zeta Chapter

Outstanding Scholarship at the Undergraduate Level, American University School of Public Affairs, 2017-2018

Outstanding Leadership in the AU Community, American University Honors and Scholars Program, 2016-2017

Drawing Strength from Judaism to Navigate a Broken World Together

John Lewis helped me realize I wanted to be a rabbi. In March 2018, as a lead organizer of the Congressional Solidarity Walkout to End Gun Violence, I had the honor of introducing the famed civil rights activist and congressman at the rally. One month earlier, at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, 17 people were killed, including Alyssa Alhadeff, my camper from URJ Camp Coleman. My speech introducing Rep. Lewis included Jewish texts and values. After the rally, three high schoolers approached me and shared how meaningful it was for them to hear a specifically Jewish perspective. It was then I knew that *tikkun olam*, repairing the world, is about more than social justice. Judaism is a way to move through a broken world, *together*. Our rituals, traditions, songs, and prayers give me a framework to understand and process my life, in both profound sorrow and incredible joy. By proudly sharing that framework of Jewish living, I helped strengthen the students' commitment to activism and their connection to Jewish community. Moments like these, when Judaism brings people together and enriches our engagement with the world, inspire my rabbinate.

Judaism extends beyond what happens inside of a synagogue, or in celebrating holidays. Our history, texts, and values can guide and sustain us in every moment of our lives. Judaism can even inform how we think. This way of thinking lives on in the Talmud and its arcane arguments, magical stories, and intricate textual interpretation. I love studying the Talmud, not because I believe everything in it happened (I don't), or because every single law it details impacts me (they don't), but because it typifies Jewish thinking and how Jews have constructed real and imagined communities for thousands of years. I am delighted by the meandering discussion, witty retorts, and surprising anecdotes. Every page is a conversation between competing ideas, conflicting values, and divergent traditions. Engaging in Jewish learning with others nourishes my soul. Rabbi Soloveitchik profoundly describes Jewish study halls as filled with teachers and

students of the present, alongside all those who have engaged with the text previously, each sharing equally in the dialogue. He calls Jewish learning “the march of centuries, the conversation of generations, the dialogue between antiquity and present.” I want my rabbinate to welcome each and every Jew to this eternal conversation. We can write a new page of Talmud, joining our diverse voices with those of generations past. This is how we will construct the Jewish future.

I believe we must help each person in our Jewish communities find meaning at the intersection of Jewish wisdom and their own lived experiences. We can connect them to our shared tradition and empower them to express their authentic Judaism. This is what I cherish most in my work. When studying with a *Bat Mitzvah* student with different learning needs at my student pulpit, I created an individualized experience for her. We paired Jewish learning with her passionate interest in rituals around death and burial, inspired by her love of ancient Egypt and her father’s work as a funeral director. In addition to leading prayer, she delivered a wonderful *d’var Torah* that shared Jewish traditions on burial, her opinions and values, and why living Jewishly is meaningful to her. In my meetings with a conversion student, we wrestled with her family’s hesitant reaction to her conversion. We transformed her self-doubt into pride and belonging through her chosen Hebrew name. I was filled with joy as she told the *beit din* how her name honored both her family and her new place among the Jewish People.

Through one-on-one conversations in a rabbi’s study, in teaching groups of all ages, and at meaningful life cycle moments, I want to help shape the Jewish future. Messages from the pulpit can be moments of teaching to start a conversation, framing challenging topics for further engagement. For me, our communities are strongest when we explore these topics honestly and sensitively, grounding ourselves in tradition. A community that addresses all aspects of our lives in a trusting and supportive way models the Jewish spirit and demonstrates the value of Jewish life. Together, we can find our way through this broken world.