

# OHALAH: Association of Rabbis for Jewish Renewal

## Comprehensive Membership Policy

### **I. Processing Applications for Membership**

All matters in the determination of individual applications for membership in Ohalah are delegated for investigation, deliberation and recommendation by the Board of Governors to the Membership Committee. The Membership Committee shall report to the Board on its recommendations and upon accepting the report of the Membership Committee the recommendations shall be deemed in effect. The Board will, in general, have the presumption of confidence in the recommendations of the Membership Committee.

The request of three members of the Board shall be necessary for the Board to revisit deliberations on any candidate. The Board will not make a decision at variance with that of the Membership Committee until Board discussion has been held with the chair (or alternate) of the Membership Committee participating (in person or by teleconference). Implementation of this policy may necessitate the deferral of action on such a Membership application.

OHALAH shall maintain various types of membership for rabbis and cantors. Each type shall be defined by the board and shall carry different benefits and responsibilities. All types of membership shall carry an application requirement and all applications shall be investigated, deliberated and recommended by the Membership Committee to the Board pursuant to the terms of this policy.

### **II. Membership Qualifications**

OHALAH is an association in which rabbis and cantors interested in, and committed to, Jewish Renewal can come together to share learning, chavershaft, tefillah and opportunities for personal, professional and spiritual growth.

Membership in OHALAH is open to rabbis and cantors who are committed to maintaining high standards of professional ethics and conduct and who have completed a course of study embracing

- classical modalities of Jewish learning;
- substantial studies in the disciplines of contemporary Judaic scholarship, including Biblical studies, history and modern philosophy; and

- professional training and development, including pastoral counseling and professional ethics.

### **III. Rabbinic and Cantorial Qualifications**

A. Pursuant to the above Membership Qualifications, the Membership Committee of OHALAH (hereinafter "Membership Committee") shall maintain a list of institutions and programs of training for rabbis and cantors whose graduates shall be automatically be deemed to have completed an appropriate course of study in preparation for the rabbinate or cantorate. This list shall be published on OHALAH's application for membership and may be revised from time to time without notice.

B. The Membership Committee shall also maintain a list of institutions, programs and individuals which are not an acceptable source of rabbinic or cantorial training. This list shall be made available upon request directed to the President of the Board of Governors of OHALAH (hereinafter the "Board") or the Chair of the Membership Committee and may be revised from time to time without notice.

C. The lists of acceptable and unacceptable semikha programs identified in A and B above shall be approved by the Board of OHALAH. The vote of a majority of the Board shall be required to add or remove a program from either list.

D. Applicants whose training is from an institution other than those identified in paragraphs A and B above shall be asked to provide supplemental information regarding their Judaic, secular and professional training. The questions concerning this supplemental information shall appear on a supplemental form. The Membership Committee may exercise discretion to seek further details concerning training and competencies of such a candidate, and will determine in its discretion whether each such applicant meets the standards of training for the rabbinate or cantorate described in the Membership Qualifications above.

### **IV. PROFESSIONAL COLLEGIALITY AND COMPATIBILITY**

A. To ascertain that candidates for membership share a basis of professional collegiality with the membership of OHALAH, and to obtain confidential reports on the professional ethical standards of each applicant, letters of recommendation shall be required as specified on the application forms, which forms may be revised from time to time. Where the source of a recommendation is well known to the Membership Committee, informal electronic transmission of the

recommendation shall be acceptable. Recommendations from all other sources shall be signed and submitted on professional stationery.

A candidate's inability to provide recommendations which are deemed adequate by a majority of the Membership Committee shall be grounds for denial of membership.

B. OHALAH requires broad acceptance and tolerance on the part of its members for one another and for the vast diversity in customs and practice among Clal Yisrael. The Membership Committee shall ascertain this by reviewing one or more of the following:

1. Response to a brief statement on the membership application form;
2. Reference to publications of the applicant such as books and articles;
3. Personal conversation or interview with applicant by one or more members of the Membership Committee, the Board of Governors or the Outreach Committee.

If, upon review of that material described in this section, a majority of the Membership Committee determines that a candidate is not compatible, such determination shall be grounds for denial of membership.

## **V. Professional Ethics**

A. Candidates shall be asked whether they have ever been denied membership in a rabbinic or cantorial association to which they have applied, and whether they have ever been suspended, expelled, placed on probation, or subject to other disciplinary action by a rabbinic or cantorial association for any reason other than for the non-payment of dues. An affirmative answer to one or more of the points in the above sentence may, in the discretion of the membership committee, be grounds for denial of membership in Ohalah, depending on whether the reasons for the candidate's previous expulsion, denial, etc., would amount to a violation of Ohalah's ethical guidelines, financial or other breaches of trust, professional boundaries, or professional sexual ethics.

B. The current list of applicants for membership in Ohalah should be routinely shared between the Membership Committee, the Board and the Ethics Committee. If the Membership Committee or the Board of Governors or the Ethics Committee receive written or verbal acknowledgment by an official representative of a rabbinic or cantorial association that an applicant was denied membership in or suspended, expelled, placed on probation or been subject to other disciplinary

action, such acknowledgment shall constitute grounds for denial of membership in OHALH. Upon request, the Membership Committee shall provide an applicant with written information as to which rabbinic or cantorial association has provided such information. However, the source of the information and any written documentation shall be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law.

C. If an individual applies for membership and there is probable cause that an ethics complaint would be brought against applicant or an ethics investigation would be initiated were s/he a member, the Membership Committee shall deliberate upon the candidacy for membership.

D. If the ordination is from an unacceptable source on the list described in section III.B. above, or if the individual would not be admitted to Ohalah for other reasons pursuant to this policy, the process of declining a membership shall be followed by the Membership Committee and the Board as described in Section I above. If that candidate should indicate a wish to appeal denial of membership, s/he shall be advised that in the event that the appeal is successful s/he will immediately face a hearing with the Ethics Committee.

E. If the individual would be accepted into Ohalah membership, the Ethics Committee shall be advised, and shall contact that individual, advising him or her that a process of investigation with the Ethics Committee will need to precede any action on acceptance for membership in Ohalah. If the determination of the Ethics Committee is one that would lead to expulsion from Ohalah, the candidate will not be admitted as a member to Ohalah. If the determination of the Ethics Committee is for any sanction other than expulsion the person shall be admitted to Ohalah with the sanction or directive of the Ethics Committee coming into immediate effect.

F. The applicant shall be notified by the President of the Board or the Chair of the Ethics Committee or the Chair of the Membership Committee that there is an ethics complaint which has been referred to the Ethics Committee and that the candidate shall have the choice of working with the Ethics Committee to address the complaint or withdrawing the application for membership. In the latter case, the individual shall not be allowed to attend Ohalah sponsored events or conferences, and shall not receive any of the benefits of Ohalah membership.