

Hiring a Second Rabbi

A congregation may reach a point when it needs to hire a second rabbi. While growth in membership and the consequent need for more pastoral and educational support is the most common reason, other causes include the desire to add new programs that the current rabbi does not have time to work on, the need to devote the current rabbi's time to areas the rabbi is most comfortable with and is best at, and/or an overall redesign of the congregation's staffing.

The decision to hire a second rabbi works best when all parties – rabbi and board – agree that it is in the best interest of the congregation, and a very specific written job description is agreed upon by the rabbi and board. The job description should clearly delineate the reporting structure.

The placement process is largely the same as the one for hiring any rabbi. The placement guidelines (<https://reconplacement.org/guidelines.php>) outline and explain that process. The rabbi is not a member of the search committee (guidelines section XII.H) because you are searching for a new rabbi for the congregation. The committee should feel free to ask questions it might not ask if the rabbi was in the room. The rabbi does meet separately with each candidate and can ask questions and discuss issues that the rabbi might not raise if the committee were in the room. The rabbi should tell the committee which candidates the rabbi could not work with – essentially a veto – but cannot tell the committee which rabbi to recommend for hiring.

Once the rabbi is hired and a letter of agreement (including the job description by reference) is signed, a transition committee should be established. The committee can help the new rabbi integrate into the congregation and can work with the current rabbi and congregational leadership in maximizing the work of the second rabbi. It may also be helpful to bring in a consultant who can help to clear up any issues that arise from the changes in staffing.

Once the transition work is completed (usually 9 to 12 months) each rabbi should then have a liaison committee and access to a discretionary fund. There will also be a need to establish an evaluation process for the new rabbi as the position and its work evolves.