

## Sabbatical Overview

The sabbatical is a desirable and necessary part of the life cycle of a rabbi. It gives the rabbi opportunities for study and growth that would not otherwise be possible. Rabbis return from sabbaticals with new energy, vision and enthusiasm, which works to the benefit of the congregation. It helps prevent burnout and it allows the rabbi to take care of her/his well-being as a person.

Since the idea of the sabbatical is based on the sabbatical year decreed in the Torah (Leviticus 25) the normal expectation is that a sabbatical will be a year long, though some rabbis do not want or cannot take an entire year. How the year is taken, as a whole or in segments, over a 2 year or longer period, from the end of Simchat Torah until a month before Rosh Hashanah, is generally determined by what the rabbi will be doing and her/his needs. The most common options are:

- a full year
- a modified year (close of Simchat Torah - month before Rosh Hashanah)
- 6 months ( taken once or twice over a period of 2/3 years)

Less common options are:

- 4 months taken each year for 3 consecutive years
- 3 months taken each year for 4 consecutive years

It is expected that the rabbi will determine when he/she will go on sabbatical in consultation with the congregation.

The normal time is in the 7<sup>th</sup> year and at 7 year increments. The sabbatical year is best timed when it is not the next-to-last or the last year of a contract.

Salary during the sabbatical year is usually handled as follows:

- full year -  $\frac{1}{2}$
- modified year -  $\frac{3}{4}$
- six months or shorter segments - full pay for each segment

It is expected that all benefits are fully maintained during any sabbatical period and that the sabbatical does not count against vacation time or sick leave or personal leave or parenting leave.

The flow of the congregation's budget and the preplanning for the sabbatical will determine which model works best.

Both the budget for the sabbatical and how the congregation will arrange for interim rabbinic coverage should be part of a plan of the congregation. The earlier funds are put aside, lay people are trained to do tasks, options explored. - the better. Congregations should think of the expense involved as a capital expense and not an operating expense.

This can be a very exciting period for the rabbi and the congregation and both will hopefully be stronger and more supportive of each other after the sabbatical is completed.