

Rabbi Emma Gottlieb

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WORK EXPERIENCE: SYNAGOGUE LIFE

Rabbi, Temple Israel CTPJC, Cape Town, South Africa, Oct 2018 - present (Engagement Portfolio)

Responsibilities include: Lead congregational worship for Shabbat and holidays in partnership with clergy-team and volunteer singers

Plan and implement annual calendar of festival programming and adult education offerings in partnership with clergy and staff programming teams

Officiate at life-cycle ceremonies for members and non-members, including planning counseling, and supporting couples and families through preparation and celebration

Plan and lead Shabbat walks/hikes, and outdoor learning and community programming

Support the development of the religious school curriculum, teacher and tutor training

Work 1:1 with B'nai Mitzvah students on final preparations, Divrei Torah, and support B'nai Mitzvah families through the process of preparation and celebration

Raising funds and awareness of/for the shul in partnership with the clergy team and Executive Director, through building relationships, creating opportunities, and developing new membership

Lead the Jews By Choice Program in partnership with clergy team, including teaching, developing curriculum, supervising teachers, mentoring students, and occasional admin tasks

Pastoral care of members who are ill, struggling, spiritually seeking and/or bereaved, including visiting, counseling, connecting and supporting

Support the youth movement through teaching, mentoring, participating, training and advocating

Participate in Interfaith dialogue and programming, as well as community events and speaking engagements in the broader Jewish community

Support and create opportunities for the development of lay leaders, volunteer singers, and future Jewish professionals in partnership with the clergy and staff programming teams

Serve a term as the Chair of the national rabbinic organization (South African Association of Progressive Rabbis 2022-2024)

Host Shabbat dinners for young couples, conversion students and families from the shul as well as perspective members

Created the Tikkun Team (T2) taskforce in partnership with shul's Care Coordinator, participate in annual Tikkun Olam related programming and projects including supporting the planning and leading of Pride Shabbat annually

Part-Time Second Rabbi, City Shul, Toronto, Ontario, September 2015- September 2017

Responsibilities:

Plan and lead Mishpacha family services, provide Shabbat pulpit coverage as needed, and co-lead Holiday services with Rabbi Goldstein

Develop, coordinate and lead High Holiday Family services, plan and lead parts of adult High Holiday services in partnership with Rabbi Goldstein

Plan, prepare and teach B'nai Mitzvah class (weekly) and Chai School Program (monthly)

Teach Adult Ed and Adult B'nai Mitzvah classes as needed

Organize and encourage development of 20/30's community within City Shul

Plan and implement B'nai Mitzvah Shabbaton in partnership with Rabbi Goldstein

Develop and Lead grades 6/7 Havdalah programs and Youth Shabbat

Lifecycle coverage as needed

Represent City Shul at various communal events as needed

Rabbi and Head of School, Temple Beth David of the South Shore, Canton, MA,

July 2012- August 2015 (130 households)

Responsibilities:

Oversee and prepare all aspects of Hebrew and Religious School programming, including hiring and supervising teachers, overseeing Hebrew and Project-Based Learning curriculum, interfacing with parents, acting as advisory member of School Committee, teaching third-grade Hebrew, B'nai Mitzvah and Confirmation classes and planning and running Family Education programming

Lead engaging and musical weekly Shabbat evening services with cantorial soloist, weekly Shabbat morning services self-accompanied on guitar, and monthly Tot-Shabbat services

Lead High Holy Day, Festival and Yizkor services

Officiate at life-cycle events

Pastoral counseling

Sponsor candidates for conversion and mentor them during their study and preparation

Create, develop and teach adult education classes and programs

Oversee B'nai Mitzvah preparation including selection and oversight of tutors and working directly with students on preparation of D'var Torah

Serve as ambassador of the Jewish community in the wider Canton & Boston communities

Ex-officio member of Board of Directors, Executive, Ritual, Membership, Youth, Social Action, *Chesed*, Adult Education and School Committees

Support our URJ camps by serving as faculty

Accomplishments:

Torah: Successfully implemented a re-visioning of school structure and curriculum by directing a visioning team made up of School Committee, Board and Executive Committee members, parents and teachers. Secured a multi-year grant from Combined Jewish Philanthropies to support implementation of new structure & curriculum.

Avodah: Introduced Adult Education programming as part of *S'lichot* observance, introduced enhancements to Shabbat worship including new music, learning about *t'fillah* woven into the worship services, monthly Social Justice themed sermon, monthly *Simcha Shabbat*, new Family service *siddur*, new Youth *Siddur* for Wednesday evening *t'fillah*, introduced annual Interfaith Family Shabbat service and program, reinvigorated Tot Shabbat program.

Gemilut Chasadim: Participated in America's Journey for Justice march (summer 2015); participated in 36 Rabbi's Shave for the Brave (2014) raising \$8500 for Pediatric Cancer Research; ongoing participation in area-wise social justice programming (e.g. Regional Mitzvah Day, Habitat for Humanity builds, Solidarity Vigils)

Israel: planned and led congregational interfaith trip to Israel in partnership with local UCC churches, summer 2014

Kehilah: Participated in *Siach*, a community and professional development resource for rabbis in their first 2-10 years of the rabbinate

Rabbi, Temple Beth Israel, Plattsburgh, NY, August 2010-June 2012 (75 households)

Accomplishments:

Torah: introduced Torah Tots curriculum (written and implemented)

Avodah: introduced Tot Shabbat, Mishkan T'filah, Music & Meditation on Yom Kippur, enhancements to Shabbat worship including new music, monthly themed services, monthly learning about T'filah woven into the worship service, monthly early service

Gemilut Chasadim: Participation in programs for the homeless [Interfaith FoodShelf and Family Promise]

Interfaith: member and Secretary of Interfaith Council of Plattsburgh and Clinton County (includes participation in Interfaith Thanksgiving service, Interfaith Seder, and Interfaith projects to address social injustice in our communities); member of Champlain Valley Physician's Hospital Spiritual Care Committee; regular speaker at St. Anthony's Catholic School

Israel: participated in CCAR trip for rabbis to learn about organizing and leading trips in Israel; currently co-organizing a multi-congregational trip to Israel for June 2012

Rabbinic Internships, 2007-2010

Rabbinic Intern, Community Synagogue of Rye, Rye, NY, 2008 - 2010

Student Rabbi, Temple Shalom, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2007 - 2008

Cantorial Internships & Soloist Work, 2001-2007

Cantorial Intern, Temple Israel of Jamaica, Queens NY, 2006-2007

Cantorial Intern, Garden City Jewish Center, Garden City, NY, 2005-2006

Cantorial Soloist, KOLEL Adult Education Centre, Toronto, Ontario, fall 2003

Cantorial Soloist, Congregation Shir Libeinu, Toronto, Ontario, fall 2002

Cantorial Soloist, Congregation Shalom V'Tikvah, Pickering, Ontario, fall 2001

WORK EXPERIENCE: YOUTH AND CAMPING

Dean of Jewish Living, URJ Camp George, Summer 2016

Responsible for overseeing all aspects of Jewish life at Camp George, including

- Supervision of Education Director and Rosh T'fillah (including Limmud Curriculum and weekly T'fillah structure)
- Supervision of Song-leading team
- Oversight and care of camp Torah and ritual objects (including creation of new ritual objects such as tallitot)
- Supervision of B'nai Mitzvah tutoring program in partnership with camp faculty
- Creation and implementation of Staff Limmud curriculum
- Creation of CIT Limmud curriculum in partnership with CIT staff
- Creation and implementation of weekly *middot* program
- Communicating and liaising with camp faculty before and during camp
- Fundraising for Camp Kippot drive (raised over \$2000 for new camp kippot, 1 per camper)

Faculty, URJ Camps

URJ Crane Lake Camp, Summers 2010 - 2015

URJ 6 Points Sci-Tech Academy, Summers 2014 - 2015 & 2022 (Inaugural Faculty Member)

Madricha, Israel Outdoors Birthright Israel, May 2007

Assisted tour guide, led evening programming, created and led Shabbat services, oversaw logistical and administrative components.

Education and T'filah Director, URJ Camp Harlam, Kunkletown, PA, summer 2006

Implemented and taught *Shiur* (Jewish education) curricula

Supervised and formally evaluated *Shiur* and song leaders

Created, facilitated and co-led worship services

Oversaw all Jewish worship and ritual components of camp life

Acted as liaison between faculty and staff

Madricha (counselor) and T'Fillah Coordinator, North American Federation of Temple Youth in Israel, summer 2005

Guided and supervised teenagers through ancient, modern, and natural sites around Israel

Responsible for all ritual and worship components of the trip

Resident Advisor (counselor), KUTZ Leadership Academy, Warwick, NY, summer 2001

Supervised participants, taught Torah trope & guitar electives, facilitated programming

Counselor and Song Leader, URJ Camp George, Parry Sound, Ontario, summer 1999

Supervised campers, led song sessions, created and facilitated worship experiences

Religious School Teaching Experience, 1996-Present

Senior Religious School Teacher, Temple Kol Ami, Thornhill, Ontario, 2003-2004

Hebrew Teacher, Temple Iyr Ha'Melech, Kingston, Ontario, 2000-2001

Torah Trope Teacher/B'nai Mitzvah Tutor/Music Teacher, Temple Kol Ami,

Thornhill, Ontario, 1996-2000

Political, Religious and Education Chairperson, Hillel, Queen's University, 2001-2003

WORK EXPERIENCE: ORGANIZATIONAL

Project Director, J-BORHOOD, summer 2009

Created program proposal for integration of Jewish 20s-30s into synagogue life

Intern, UJC Rabbinic Cabinet, New York City, NY, October 2009-June 2010

Collected and edited divrei Torah (words of Torah) for the monthly Mekor Chaim

Collected and edited submissions for the Spring 2010 edition of The Orchard

Helped to develop and maintain the Rabbinic Cabinet website

Intern, URJ Department of Lifelong Jewish Learning, New York City, NY, summer 2008

Edited curriculum created to train teachers preparing to work in Reform settings

Collected and compiled feedback on curriculum reviews

Research Assistant on a projects relating to effective programming for Jewish teens

Intern, URJ Dept. of Worship, Music & Religious Living, NYC, NY, June 2007-May 2008

Wrote programs for URJ Shabbat Initiative program/resource book

Helped plan and implement *Hadracha* Seminar for lay-leaders (May 2008)

Researched commentaries for URJ Biennial '07 Shabbat morning Torah study

Administered content of [URJ Shabbat Blog](#)

EDUCATION

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, New York City

School of Sacred Music – June 2004–January 2007

M.A. in Hebrew Literature, April 2010

***Smicha* (Rabbinic Ordination)**, May 2010

Thesis Topic: Jewish Understandings of Resurrection

Bellevue Hospital Center: The Bellevue Chaplains Clinical Pastoral Education, New York City

One unit (400 hours) of Clinical Pastoral Education, Spring 2007

Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada

B.A. dual concentration in Religious Studies and Vocal Music, 2004

Rabbi Emma Gottlieb Rabbinic Vision Statement (1st 10 years)

*No more shall you be called Jacob, but Israel...for you have struggled with
God (yisra-El) and with human beings, and you have prevailed.*

- Gen. 37:29

Our movement's most recent Torah commentary teaches that the original meaning of "Israel" is difficult to concisely define. It can be construed as "he struggles with God," or "God struggles," or "God rules," or "his struggle is mighty," and more. Our commentary also teaches us that, "a name change often signifies a change in character". This change of character not only redefined Jacob, it *predefined* what our nature as a people would be – a people who struggle with God; a people who witness God's struggle; a people who are contracted through a *brit* (covenant) to consider God's rules; a people who, over the course of history, would struggle mightily; and more.

My understanding of the Jewish People's purpose and of my own role as a Jew in the world is deeply rooted in this teaching. I believe that we as a people (and thus I as an individual) are meant to struggle – for meaning (*Emet*), for self-betterment (*Shleimut*), and for the betterment of the world in which we live (*Tikkun Olam*). Jewish tradition teaches us that everything stands on three pillars – **God, Torah, and The People of Israel**. Indeed, each of these pillars is necessary to the struggles for *emet*, *shleimut*, and *tikkun olam*.

The search for meaning is bound up in our awareness of and our struggles against limitation. It often seems a tragic irony that humanity is simultaneously advanced and restricted; that being able to comprehend our potential, we are also painfully aware of what we *cannot* do. If this is the curse, than I believe the blessing can be found in the simple fact that we are not alone - that together we improve our odds, increase our resources, maximize our potential and provide for one another. I believe that **God** made a choice to give us awareness, to give us freewill (thereby limiting God's own power to be directly involved), and perhaps most importantly, to give us one another.

Based on experiences in my own life, and on my observations of the lives of others, it seems to me that while God has chosen not to *directly* act in our world, we have the power and the potential to act on God's behalf. We have the ability to choose right from wrong, to reach out and help one another, and to use the **Torah** that God has given us as a guide for when and how to do so. When we act to our full potential, we actualize God in our world. When we don't, God is silenced.

Thus we, **The People of Israel**, are responsible for enacting and activating God in both our daily interactions and in the world at large. If God is to take care of our world, *we* must take care of our world; if God is to protect us than *we* must protect ourselves and one another; and if God is to be present for us, *we* must each be present for others. I have seen for myself how, with the support of others, and a faith that there is meaning even when it escapes us, we are able to push ourselves beyond our wildest imaginings – when we discover that we are not alone, we discover a strength we did not know we had.

This understanding has the potential to inform all of our actions and interactions. If I truly believe that I am not only created *b'tzelem elohim* (in God's image), but even more so, that I act on God's behalf in all that I do, I hopefully - on my best days - feel the weight of that duty motivating me and encouraging me to be the best person I can be – to treat myself and others as well as possible, and to do what I can to make the world a better place.

These foundational beliefs will hopefully continue to inform not only my choices and interactions as one person in the world but also as a rabbinic caregiver and counselor in both formal and informal interactions. Keeping this worldview in the back of my mind reminds me to do a better job of listening, of trying to afford others dignity and respect, of getting out of my own-head and into the world more often, and of considering God's will as I understand it to be revealed in our sacred texts and traditions whenever I have a choice to make.

As a rabbi, I hope to guide others through their own struggles toward *emet*, *shleimut*, and *tikkun olam* through the guidance of **Torah**, the sense of obligation that **The People of Israel** have to one another, and the motivation that comes from knowing each of us has the power to act in the world on **God's** behalf. I see my role as being a facilitator for others throughout the journeys of their lives – acting as a resource for them to access the wisdom and rituals of our traditions and providing counsel and comfort along the way. As a rabbi, I also believe it is my duty to set the bar high and to support people in reaching for their full potential, both as Jews and as human beings. This will necessitate both encouraging others to think and act beyond their comfort zone as well as continually pushing myself to ensure that I practice what I preach.

I hope to accomplish all of this through **teaching and dialogue**; through setting an example of living a life based in **Jewish values**; through **empowering others** to act; through the teachings and **rituals** of our heritage; through **inspiring others** to pass these teachings and rituals on to those around them; and through engaging others in **meaningful worship**. I believe music to be an integral part of this last piece of my mission and of my rabbinate. I understand music to be a powerful vehicle for bringing people and God together in sacred time and space.

My serving of the Jewish people would be incomplete without an inclusion of music and I feel blessed to be able to lead others in song – especially when in cooperation with those who share my passion for its efficacy.

I have come to understand that **being a rabbi also necessitates striking a balance between one's own vision and the vision of one's community**. Therefore the above statement is just that, a vision rather than an expectation. While it is important for the rabbi to have and to set standards, I believe it is equally important to be realistic about the community one serves and to find ways, through dialogue, education, and shared visioning, of bridging the natural gap between reality and idealism. Some of my proudest accomplishments as a rabbi thus far have come from working in partnership with others for the betterment of the community.

Finally, having spent the bulk of my rabbinate thus far in congregational life, and also some time as a rabbi in other kinds of communities, I have also come to understand that a rabbi is not defined by having a community to lead, but rather, by the personal interactions of teaching, modeling and engaging wherever one might be. I bring all of my rabbinic strengths and commitment to bear in whatever situation I may find myself - be it at camp, around a table of students I'm tutoring, working one-to-one with a young man with autism, or at an informal gathering of Jewish 20/30's. **Being a rabbi means looking for opportunities to bring Judaism into people's lives - meaningfully - both inside and outside of the synagogue walls.**

To move beyond Jacob - to truly become *Yisrael*, a people who struggles - means that the road will not always be easy or pleasant. Jacob is injured in his struggle and each of us, in our own way, will meet with pain and adversity along the way. **As your rabbi I promise not to watch you struggle, but to struggle along beside you** - to share what I glean from my own struggles and to learn from your lives as well. I promise to share in your joys and in your sorrows and to help you shape the powerful and poignant moments of your lives with the beautiful language and rituals of our people.

May each of us be blessed by the struggle and may we, together, find meaning and fulfillment in a world we continually strive to make better.

Kein Yehi Ratzon, May it be God's will.