

## Is Rabbinic Leadership At Risk? A Research-Driven Strategy to Inspire Innovation and Action

### The Changing Landscape of Rabbinic Leadership

For generations rabbis have been the cornerstone of Jewish communities, acting as wise teachers, spiritual guides, and connectors to God, Torah, and the Jewish People. Atra's 2023 study revealed that 80% of North America's young Jews seek a relationship with a rabbi; however, young Jews in particular struggle to establish meaningful connections with rabbis. The future of the rabbinic pipeline remains uncertain. As more rabbis retire or leave the rabbinate, the question of who will step into these leadership roles grows more urgent.

Without skilled and inspiring rabbis, Jewish communities are weaker. While there are many paths to Jewish connection, a rabbi often serves as the most compelling guide to Jewish identity. Great rabbis unite communities, deepen Jewish engagement and knowledge, and inspire future leaders—both professional and lay. Simply put, **truly excellent rabbis have exponential power to fuel a stronger and more connected Jewish future.**

Without credible data to isolate the key factors shaping the pipeline trend, we cannot determine the most effective strategies to strengthen it. This is where Atra has an important role to play.

### Strengthening the Rabbinic Pipeline

Atra is leading an unprecedented, field-wide initiative to ensure a vibrant future for rabbinic leadership. With generous support from the H&F Baker Foundation, Jim Joseph Foundation, the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation and in partnership with Rosov Consulting, this initiative brings together seminaries and ordination programs, employers of rabbis, funders, and partner organizations to foster collaboration, raise awareness, and inspire strategic action. Through in-depth research and targeted field-building efforts, Atra is uncovering critical questions about recruitment, retention, and the gaps in rabbinic leadership across diverse Jewish communities. **This initiative will equip the field with knowledge, strategies, and collaborative pathways to strengthen the rabbinic pipeline and ensure the vitality and sustainability of rabbinic leadership.**

### A Research to Action Approach

Building on its legacy of high-impact research and cross-denominational collaboration, Atra is spearheading a coordinated effort to align data, strategy, and investment in rabbinic leadership.

#### Research

- **Understanding the Problem:** In partnership with Rosov Consulting, Atra will document matriculation trends over the last decade within the evolving ecosystem of rabbinical training programs; better understand the burgeoning non-traditional programs ordaining rabbis; and identify where rabbinical supply and demand trends have left communities without rabbis or without rabbis possessing the skill sets and characteristics necessary to best serve Jewish communities.

- **Gathering In-Depth Data:** Through the research study, to be published in the third quarter of 2025, Atra is investigating the challenges prospective rabbis face in committing to a rabbinical path, examining why high-potential, Jewishly engaged individuals do or do not choose to pursue the rabbinate, and determining where the field can act most effectively to counteract obstacles for a thriving rabbinic pipeline.

### Dissemination & Shaping Solutions

Through convenings, reports, and briefings, this initiative will foster effective collaboration and ensure that data-driven strategies translate into concrete actions, investments, and field-wide solutions to strengthen the rabbinic pipeline.

- **Gathering Field-Wide Insights:** Beyond the study, Atra will engage with initiatives currently testing new models for rabbinic recruitment, training, and retention. By learning from pilot programs, Atra will analyze real-time rabbinic pipeline work to identify effective strategies and promising interventions.
- **Catalyzing Collaboration for Learning and Action:** Atra will bring together seminaries, rabbinic educators, employers of rabbis, and community leaders to engage with research findings, pilot learnings, and strategic insights.
- **Shaping Field-Wide Priorities, Goals and Strategies:** In collaboration with rabbinic educators and outside systems change experts, Atra will propose specific actionable goals and high-impact strategies to catalyze the field to move towards more comprehensive solutions.

### From Insight to Impact

While the research is foundational, the critical next step is turning findings into action through:

- **Fostering Innovation and Sustainable Solutions:** Atra will serve as a hub for those creating scalable models that strengthen the rabbinic pipeline. By facilitating experimentation, connecting initiatives, and coordinating institutions, Atra will help refine and expand promising approaches to rabbinic recruitment, training, and retention. Through knowledge exchange and strategic collaboration, we will ensure that insights from these efforts drive sustainable impact across the Jewish communal ecosystem.
- **Measuring Impact and Driving Growth:** Atra will facilitate the development of shared metrics to assess interventions and promote alignment across the field about how to measure impact. Findings from current rabbinic pipeline initiatives will inform broader efforts, fostering a data-driven and iterative approach to strengthening the field.

### Why Atra

Atra is well poised to be a leader in solving the rabbinic leadership gap that has far reaching effects for Jewish engagement of a new generation. As a proudly pluralistic organization, Atra works across denominations and institutions to support, train, and empower rabbis to meet the evolving needs of Jewish communities. As a key partner in the Talent Pipeline Collaborative with Leading Edge, Atra is driving solutions for the rabbinic pipeline as a critical component of the broader effort to strengthen

Jewish leadership and ensure a thriving Jewish future. Atra's access to the American rabbinate coupled with the respect it has garnered in the field, places Atra in a unique position to leverage its broad knowledge and relationships to create field wide change for rabbis and the American Jewish community.

## How to Be Involved

1. Join us at the 2025 Jewish Funders Network International Conference (Nashville); **March 24, 8am-9am**: Crisis or Opportunity? Strengthening the Rabbinic Pipeline for the Future of Jewish Leadership
2. **Upcoming Webinars**: Atra is hosting two webinars in early April to provide more details on this initiative as well as provide an overview of findings from the first phase of the research. [Register here](#) or email [ariel@atrarabbis.org](mailto:ariel@atrarabbis.org) for a private information session.
3. **Sign up for Quarterly Updates**: [Click here](#) to receive updates about the project's progress, evolution and impact as well as further opportunities to get involved.
4. **Private Events**
  - a. If you are interested in having your community or network learn more about this initiative, Atra can coordinate a private presentation. Please email [ariel@atrarabbis.org](mailto:ariel@atrarabbis.org) for more information.
5. **Sneak Peeks of the Research Findings**: Atra is hosting invitation-only advanced previews of the research in summer 2025. To receive an invitation to a virtual or in-person preview, [click here](#).
6. **Position paper and reports** will be made available on Atra's website at [www.atrarabbis.org/research](http://www.atrarabbis.org/research).