

FAQs

What is the purpose of the Discovery Committee?

The Discovery Committee was formed by members of the Executive Committee as a precursor to a Rabbinic Search Process. The Discovery Committee seeks to create opportunities to learn about our community's interests, goals and concerns as we move forward into a new phase of our synagogue's life. Through informed, open-minded and respectful discussions, we hope to work together to articulate our collective mission and aspirations for the future as well as where our community stands on some fundamental issues that will help shape the upcoming Rabbinic Search.

Is this committee going to choose the Rabbi? If not, how is the work of this Committee related to the Rabbinic search?

The Discovery Committee will *not* be interviewing or selecting rabbinic candidates. Once we have completed the work as described above, a separate Rabbinic Search Committee will handle the search process. With a clearer understanding of who we are and what we believe in, the Search Committee will seek a rabbi who can help us achieve our goals.

Who is on the Discovery Committee?

The Discovery Committee represents a cross-section of BAS members – longtime members and newer arrivals, seniors, parents with school-age children, and congregants of all levels of religious observance. The committee's demographics, in other words, are representative of the synagogue membership.

The members are: David Aftergood, David Badain, Rebecca Blackman, Cynthia Ehrenkrantz, Susan Eisman, Jon Gerstel, Robin Gibbs, Rachel Halperin (co-chair), Jennifer Meyer, Loren Napoli, Robin Rattner, Joan Rosen, Susan Roth (co-chair), Roni Sarig, Alan Septimus, and Jay Siegelau.

What is the timeline for this process?

1. Research phase. Members of the Discovery Committee have reached out to Reconstructing Judaism and other organizations for resources and support, and interviewed members of other synagogues to learn from their experiences in similar endeavors. While Bet Am has its unique character, we are open to learning from others; we have been gaining very helpful insight, and we are working on how we might incorporate their experiences into our approach. **Completed June 2022.**
2. Outreach and Education phase. This will involve surveying synagogue members to learn what issues concern them as we embark on this important transition, further exploring these issues through smaller meetings and one-on-one interviews that engage the membership, and sharing information about these findings with the BAS community. We will identify issues that need to be addressed organically, from opinions, concerns, and ideas expressed in the survey, and from follow-up meetings that will be conducted with small and large groups of congregants. For topics that require further historical context or education, the Committee will provide materials and opportunities to more deeply study these issues. **Ongoing through March 2023.**
3. Findings phase. Once we have engaged the community and have identified and prioritized issues that need to be addressed, the Discovery Committee will present a summary to the Board and the congregation. In addition to passing along this data to all appropriate synagogue groups that may act upon them, these findings will inform the Rabbinic Search Committee as it proceeds to the next phase of the process. **Completed by June 2023.**

The intention of the overall process is to discover who we are, what are our concerns, and how we prioritize them so that we can better inform the members of the Rabbinic Search Committee of the community's needs and aspirations BEFORE they sit down and interview prospective rabbi candidates.

How and when can I participate — share my thoughts/ ideas/ feedback?

The Discovery Committee will be creating a variety of opportunities to engage ALL members of Bet Am Shalom. We initially envision a combination of small community conversations, Zoom group meetings, surveys, and possibly other platforms. As we gather basic information from you, we will determine which discussion modes will work best for us.

There will be opportunities to share your thoughts both in group settings as well as confidentially, through surveys and written communication. Please feel free to reach out to any Discovery Committee member. We want to hear from you! **Ongoing through March 2023.**

What kinds of communications can I expect to get? How frequently?

We intend to maintain a section on the BAS website with all current information about the process with a link in every weekly calendar and notifications of site updates.

Will Rabbi Bronstein be involved with this process?

Rabbi Bronstein is not a participant in the Discovery Committee but has shared his thoughts with the Committee and expressed his support for the process. Rabbi Bronstein will play a key role in contextualizing some of the topics we will be discussing as a community.

What happens if we don't find a Rabbi before Rabbi Bronstein leaves?

At this point, there is sufficient time to complete the Discovery Process by June of 2023. We believe we will be able to identify a sufficient number of qualified candidates, enabling us to engage a new permanent rabbi by June of 2024 – concurrent with the expiration of Rabbi Bronstein's contract. If we cannot find a worthwhile candidate to carry forward the congregation's vision, attention will shift to engaging a temporary rabbi for 2024, while the search continues with the goal of engaging a new rabbi for 2025.

Will there also be a search for a Cantor? If so, will that be a separate committee?

We will not search for a new cantor at this time because we would like to include the input of the new rabbi in a permanent hire so closely aligned with the rabbinic role. Once the new rabbi is selected, the Board of Trustees and the new rabbi will work together to determine how best to move forward in a search for a cantor in line with the desires of the congregation.