



Sample Interview Questions

General Interview Questions

- ❖ How do you see your life 5 years down the road?
- ❖ How do you spend your spare time? What are your hobbies?
- ❖ When you were at HUC, in which school activities did you participate? Which did you enjoy the most?
- ❖ Why do you think you might like to work for our particular synagogue?
- ❖ Why are you leaving your current position?
- ❖ Describe your personal level of observance. Where do you fit in the spectrum of Reform observance? Do you struggle with these questions?
- ❖ What are your views on intermarriage? Would you officiate? If so, on what terms? If not, how would you respond to the couple? What courses did you like best in college? Least? At HUC? Why?
- ❖ Why did you choose the Cantorate?
- ❖ How did you spend your vacations while in school?
- ❖ What do you know about our congregation?
- ❖ Do you feel that you have received a good general cantorial education?

Potential Questions during an in-person interview

Questions Relating to Music/Musical Style:

- ❖ What style of “non-religious music” has influenced you and do you currently listen to?
- ❖ Which Cantor(s) or secular vocalist(s) has had the greatest influence on your singing style?
- ❖ What Jewish melody or song would you choose to best illustrate your personality? Why?
- ❖ How do you feel you could best enhance the spirituality of a typical Shabbat service through music?
- ❖ How much music that would be new to Temple _____ would you introduce and how would you introduce it?
- ❖ Do you prefer the organ, the piano or the Clavinova played during the service?
- ❖ Do you play a musical instrument? Do you accompany yourself during worship?



Questions relating to Choir:

- ❖ Do you think a volunteer choir enhances the service? Why or why not?
- ❖ How would you get people to volunteer for an adult choir?
- ❖ What would you do if you didn't get any/enough/effective volunteers for the choir?
- ❖ What is your experience in recruiting and directing volunteer choirs, both adult and youth?
- ❖ How would you recruit, organize and conduct a children's/youth choir?

Questions relating to Religious Leadership:

- ❖ What do you think is the most important thing a Cantor can offer to the congregation?
- ❖ How do you view your role as a religious leader, compared to that of the Rabbi?
- ❖ If a congregant came to you and said, "I am not connecting with you through your leadership of prayer" how would you respond personally and professionally?
- ❖ Rabbis usually have a "vision" for their synagogue; do Cantors also have a "vision" and if so, what is yours?
- ❖ In a diverse congregation such as Temple _____, what do you think the top priorities for the new Cantor should be in the short term, intermediate term and long term?
- ❖ How would you prioritize the various elements of your cantorial job description? For example, religious, educational, administrative and programmatic?

Professional/Career Questions:

- ❖ If you were to be offered the position of Cantor at Temple _____, what do you think would be the most important value you could contribute to our congregation?
- ❖ There was some point in your life when you made a decision to become a Cantor. What was that defining moment in your life?
- ❖ Do you have a specific person or a situation that has influenced you in the decision to become a Cantor?
- ❖ At what point in your life did you decide to become a Cantor?



- ❖ Which of your cantorial responsibilities do you consider to be the most critical? The most rewarding?
- ❖ How would you characterize your teaching style (a) with adults? (b) with youth?
- ❖ What was your most challenging experience as a Cantor and why?
- ❖ Once engaged as our Cantor, how should you be evaluated? How often? By whom?

Questions relating to Temple Diversity:

- ❖ What is it about our congregation that attracted you to us?
- ❖ We are a very diverse congregation in _____. People tend to believe that there is not a sense of community here. What do you think about this concept?
- ❖ What do you think may work in this type of community in regard to singing and worship so it can be come more homogeneous?

Questions relating to Worship:

- ❖ Describe to us the type of Shabbat worship service that you find to be most inspirational to you.
- ❖ How would you get middle school/high school students more interested in coming to, and staying in, services?
- ❖ In what ways would you could the congregation to be more participatory?

Questions relating to your personal Philosophy:

- ❖ How does your work as a Cantor stretch you intellectually?
- ❖ Some congregants come to services to connect to the Divine through familiar melodies and rituals. Some come to be challenged to reach the Divine through new melodies and prayers. Some come on a particular Shabbat seeking one of these 2 alternatives. Some need both of these approaches, but at different times. How do you as Cantor assess and meet these needs?
- ❖ Cantor Lorel Zar-Kessler, writing on the topic of *k'lei kodesh* in S'hma, questioned whether she is a vessel of holiness or the one that fills the vessel



(her congregation.) What is your view on your role and that of the congregation as *k'lei kodesh*?

- ❖ Cantor Zar-Kessler also wrote that she is a vessel of separation, *kedusha*, which separates her – holds her – from her community. She wrote, "They need me to be separate in order to create holiness and to establish sanctity within our sacred community." Do you agree? If so, how do you separate yourself from our community while still being a part of it?
- ❖ Cantor Zar-Kessler wrote that her congregation's needs "transform me into parent, leader, priest, Jew." Do you see yourself in any or all of these roles? If so, how do fulfill those roles?

Questions relating to your Personal Interests:

- ❖ What would be some of your concerns and needs, or the needs of your family, that we would have to address?
- ❖ Were you brought up in a religious home and did you attend services on a regular basis?
- ❖ What sports—professional and college—do you follow?
- ❖ Which Cantor or Rabbi do you find the most inspirational?
- ❖ What do you expect from the congregants?
- ❖ What are your expectations, as a Cantor, upon moving to a new community? What steps would you initiate to integrate yourself in the new community?
- ❖ Do you consider yourself to be an extrovert or an introvert? Would you describe yourself as a “people person?”
- ❖ What age groups of the congregation do you think you would relate to most easily, and why?

Questions relating to Community:

- ❖ Our Rabbi is very involved in the greater (name of city or town) community. Is this something that you value? How would you like to be involved beyond the boundaries of the synagogue?
- ❖ Aside from the normal functions that are expected of a Cantor, what could someone in your position do to reach out to our community?