

RABBI SANDRA J. COHEN, D.D.

www.rabbisandracohen.org

MENTAL HEALTH OUTREACH WORK

Mental illness touches so many of us. Whenever I speak of my own experience and that of my family, there is often a crowd around me afterwards, needing to tell their own story or that of a loved one. Because of stigma and shame, we may not know that the person next to us the pew has a similar story. We become needlessly isolated, walking our journeys alone, suffering in silence. Speaking aloud about mental illness can create and enhance community. Embracing basic Jewish *מידות/middot/values*, such as *הכנסת אורחים/hachnasat orchim/welcoming guests* and *ביקר חולים/bikkur holim/visiting the sick* will help us open our doors to those who need us most.

I am committed to help lead the way as we open those doors.

EDUCATION

Hebrew Union College - Jewish institute of Religion, Cincinnati, Ohio

- Doctor of Divinity, May, 2021
- Rabbinic Ordination, 1995
- Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters, 1994; two years post-masters coursework
- Rabbinic Thesis: Mourning the Temple's Destruction: The Laws of *Tisha B'Av* and the Other Public Fasts in the *Arba'ah Turim* and the *Bet Yosef*
- Nathan Stern Prize for academic achievement (1994 and 1995)

Macalester College, St. Paul, Minnesota

- Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies, summa cum laude, 1990
- Honors Thesis: From Germany to America: The Origins of Reform Judaism
- Phi Beta Kappa, 1989
- McLean Award for academic achievement, 1990

OUTREACH OF NOTE: CLASSES AND WORKSHOPS

2021

- **Featured Speaker**, NAMI Clergy Conference, NAMI Queens/Nassau
- **Creating a Caring Community**, Boulder, CO

2020

- **Visiting the Sick and Mental Health**, , Chicago, IL
- **Visiting the Sick and Mental Health Outreach**., Nashua, NH

2019

- **Creating Light in the Darkness**, Workshop on Mental Health for Seniors, Denver, CO,
- **Interfaith Panel on Suicide in Religion**, Good Shepherd Episcopal Church, Denver
- **Hadesh Yameinu Mental Health Awareness Day**, Coordinator and Panelist, Denver
- **Bikkur Holim/Visiting the Sick Workshop: What to Say, What Not to Say**, Denver & Boulder, CO
- **Creating a Caring Community Interfaith Workshop**, Pittsburgh, PA
- **Crying Out For Help: Mental Illness Among Us**, Shaare Torah Orthodox Synagogue, Pittsburgh, PA

Created and Chair, **Mental Health Committee**, Rodef Shalom, Denver, CO (2018-present)

Scholar in Residence

- **Mental Health and Aging, Creating Community**, Bonai Shalom, Boulder, CO
- **Creating Community and Mental Health Outreach**, Beth Evergreen, Evergreen, CO
- **Mental Health Outreach** at Rodef Shalom, Pittsburgh, PA
- **Mental Health Outreach** at Temple Emanuel, Denver, CO
- **Mental Health Outreach** in Detroit, MI (Beth Israel, Ann Arbor; St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Ferndale)
- **Mental Health Outreach** at Solel Congregation, Toronto, Canada
- Preached from the bima and/or taught chesed committees at variety of synagogues (Reform, Reconstructionist, Conservative, and Modern Orthodox), on Mental Health Outreach (2016-present)

SELECT PUBLICATIONS

(See Website for more!)

Select Blogs

- Viewing Our Needs with Compassion <https://reformjudaism.org/blog/our-needs-are-gift-god>
- With Open Wounds, We Look for Gd <https://bit.ly/2HksHHe>
- Despair and Prayer <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/prayer-and-despair/>
- Joy Comes in the Morning <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/joy-comes-in-the-morning/>
- We Are More Than Our Diagnoses: Speaking About Mental Illness with Compassion and Respect, ReformJudaism.org, October, 2019 <http://bit.ly/2Jdz5OA>
- **Comforting God, Comforting Ourselves, ReformJudaism.org, August, 2019**

Other Writings

- Gd Knows Us All By Name <https://ravblog.ccarnet.org/2020/09/god-knows-us-by-name/>
- Coming Unglued: Finding myself <https://ravblog.ccarnet.org/2020/07/coming-unglued-mental-health-coronavirus/>
- Gd Knows Us All By Name <https://ravblog.ccarnet.org/2020/09/god-knows-us-by-name/>
- Responding to and Healing from Our Own 'Tzaraat' Without Stigma or Shame <https://ravblog.ccarnet.org/2020/04/tzaarat-stigma-shame/>

- [High Holy Days Tool Kit for the Blue Dove Foundation, August, 2019](#)
- [Webinar on Mental Health Outreach in Congregations/Creating Caring Communities](#)
- [Crying with my Baby: Opening Up About Postpartum Depression, February 15, 2017](#)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Studies in Pirke Avot and Sh'moneh P'rakim with LEA Hadassah (2014-present)

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Denver (OLLI) (2011-present)

Taught over 25 for this community adult educational program for Denver area seniors, including courses on the *Akaidah* (the Binding of Isaac), Maimonides' *Sh'moneh P'rakim*: a Treatise on the Soul, the Trials of Abraham, The Book of B'midar/Numbers; and Talmud.

Florence Melton Adult Mini-School teacher (1999-2014)

This two-year program involves adult students in intense study of Judaism through traditional texts. I have taught three of the four courses: **Purposes of Jewish Living** (a survey of Jewish belief and ideas), **Rhythms of Jewish Living** (a survey of Jewish ritual, life cycle and holiday practices), and **Ethics of Jewish Living** (a close examination of rabbinic texts to understand underlying values and specific ethical challenges).

Regis University (adjunct faculty in Religious Studies, 2005-present)

Taught on-line, classroom, and individual independent study on topics ranging from Introduction to the Hebrew Bible, Pastoral Care, and Suffering in Religious Traditions.

CONGREGATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Rabbi, Temple Micah, Denver, Colorado (1997-2003)

Solo rabbi of a small urban congregation. Responsibilities included preaching; officiating at services and life cycle events; teaching adults and children; supervising religious school director and involvement in all aspects of religious school; creating adult education programming; board and committee development; outreach and conversion work; interfaith and Jewish community involvement; counseling. Community and religious school tripled in size during tenure.

Assistant Rabbi, Congregation Emanuel, Denver Colorado (1995-1997)

Responsibilities included preaching; officiating at services and life cycle events; teaching adults and children; directing the Confirmation program; involvement in all aspects of the religious school; supervising staff; creating programs including Rosh Hodesh and young

adult community programming; outreach and conversion work including coordination of the Introduction to Judaism classes.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- **Dean**, Denver Institute for Jewish Studies (1998-2000)
- **Chair**, Seeking Common Ground (Bringing Israelis, Palestinians, and Americans together to listen to one another) (1995 - 1998)
- **Board Member**, Herzl Day School (1996 - 1998)
- **Board Member**, Central Agency for Jewish Education (1995-1999)
- **Member**, Rocky Mountain Rabbis and Cantors, (1995 - present); Secretary (1999-2000); Vice President (2000-2002)
- **Member**, Denver Area Interfaith Clergy Council (1995 - present)

PERSONAL

- Married to Bennett Cohen, musician and attorney. One child, Shira Cohen (currently in law school).

REFERENCES

Scholar in Residence

Rabbi Joseph Black
Congregation Emanuel
51 Grape Street
Denver, CO 80220
(303) 388-4013
[Reference](#)
black@emanueldenver.org

Rabbi Audrey Pollack
Solel Congregation
2399 Folkway Dr
Mississauga, ON
L5L 2M6
Canada
(905) 820-5915
[Reference](#)
rabbi.pollack@solel.ca

Rev. Clare Hickman
St. Luke's Episcopal Church
540 W Lewiston
Ferndale, MI 48220
(248) 543-5900
Scholar-in-Residence
[Reference](#)
rector@stlukeferndale.org

Rabbi Aaron Bisno
Rodef Shalom Congregation
4905 Fifth Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
(412) 612-6566
[Reference](#)
bisno@rodefshalom.org

Professional References

Ray Merenstein
Executive Director/NAMIColorado
3333 S. Bannock St Ste 430
Englewood, CO 80110
720-212-1123
REFERENCE Link??
executivedirector@namicolorado.org

Suzanne Parker Gerson
Senior Associate Director
ADL Mountain States Region
Denver, CO
(303) 830-7177
[Reference](#)
sparkergerson@adl.org

Dr. Mark Washofsky
Professor of Rabbinics
Hebrew Union College
3101 Clifton Avenue
Cincinnati, OH 45220
(513) 221-1875
MWashofs@cn.huc.edu

Michael Levin/Claudia DePrenger
Professional Reference
5783 E Navarron Pl
Denver, CO 80237
(303) 541-5463
[Reference](#)
levin.deprenger@gmail.com