

## Rabbi Seth H. Frisch

### Profound and Meaningful Congregational Experience ~ Background in Pastoral Counseling ~ Empowering a Meaningful Engagement with Judaism

Greetings,

By way of introduction, I am a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary and a member of the Rabbinical Assembly. Currently I serve as both *Rabbi and Spiritual Leader* of *The New Shul of Philadelphia* ([www.newshulofamerica.org](http://www.newshulofamerica.org)). *The New Shul* is considered a new and emerging community within the wider Philadelphia Jewish community. Prior to this, I served as the Rabbi of Historic Congregation Keshet Israel, which is an elderly congregation situated in the heart of the Old Jewish Quarter of Philadelphia.

As I note in my resume, immediately after having served as a congregational rabbi in Maine, I then returned to study *Counseling Psychology* at Columbia University Teachers College. At the time, my Columbia fieldwork placement was with two congregations, both of which were going through significant transitions and change.

During that time, I was able to learn a great deal in how to help a congregation maintain its core identity, while also helping to make the necessary changes to meet new challenges. As a result, I feel uniquely qualified to help any congregation experiencing change, especially with Rabbinic change, a new reality which many congregations are facing today.

I would like to add that my wife Robyn is also a Rabbi. She currently serves as the National Director of the *InterfaithFamily Fellowship* program. *InterfaithFamily* (recently renamed '18 Doors') is a new initiative, helping interfaith families regionally and across the country find a welcoming 'home' within the Jewish community.

Many people, upon hearing that we are both rabbis in the same home think that our dinner conversations must be so interesting and theologically stimulating. The truth is that while we do often discuss Jewish issues, we just as often discuss how and what our kids are doing and that all of their homework has been completed for the following day. Of note, our eldest son is studying to be an Orthodox Rabbi and when ordained, our family will have rabbis representing all three of the major streams of American Judaism. We are all different, and yet we are united in our love and respect for each other. All of us, along with our other younger children, see the Jewish people in the exact same way, as a family.

As Ron Wolfson wrote about in his book "*Relational Judaism*," relationships are the new building blocks of the Jewish community and especially important in the transitions we are all experiencing together (synagogues and rabbis alike).

I thank you for your consideration and I look forward to being in contact with a representative of your committee.

Warm regards,

Rabbi Seth Frisch

# Rabbi Seth H. Frisch

## Profound and Meaningful Pulpit Experience ~ Background and Experience in Pastoral Counseling ~ Empowering a Meaningful Engagement with Judaism

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### PROFESSIONAL HISTORY

The New Shul of Philadelphia, Abington Township, Philadelphia, PA  
**Rabbi, Founder and Spiritual Leader** (2018 to the present).

- **Creation of an Emerging Jewish Community:** Working together with Jews of all ages and all backgrounds to create an open community based on Jewish tradition, egalitarian values and openness in interaction with Interfaith families.
- **Growth:** Within three months of our founding, membership has risen to over 150 families/units
- **Internal infrastructure:** Within six months of founding we have assembled a teaching staff working with children and adults in both individualized as well as a traditional Hebrew School setting for B'nai Mitzvah and family celebrations.
- **Stage One (a):** Our current phase of infrastructural investment has achieved recognized success in *Teacher Training for Excellence in Jewish Education*.
- **Stage One (b):** Our investment in **Outreach Engagement** is successfully underway with the hiring of a new young *Engagement professional* for outreach to our Millennial demographic.

Congregation Keshet Israel, Society Hill, Philadelphia, PA  
**Rabbi and Spiritual Leader** (2012 to 2018)

- **Reinvigoration of Services:** Maintaining the original structure of the service while simultaneously working to create a smoother flow of the overall service. Continuing to expand the involvement of our younger members by introducing individual and family *simchas* into the service. Introduction of special Blessings for those visiting Israel, returning home from hospital stays and all-important life-cycle milestones. Special inclusion of Millennial elements, such as a 'welcome home' for those returning from Birthright and Honeymoon Israel trips.
- **Creation of Outreach Committee with two-fold mission:** Established "out reach" as an integral component of the institutional mission. Stimulated the development of programs to attract new members and further integrate them into the community. Continuing to develop "in reach" to the existing membership in order to transform the quality of personal connections within the congregation itself.
- **Creation of a Parent/Teacher School Partnership:** Served as the driving force to integrate the parents of the preschool community into the Tot Shabbat Program and thereby creating a bridge to more fully integrate them into the community as a whole. Worked to transform the existing Hebrew School program from a Shabbat-only School to a more robust two-day a week program with parental participation.

Lerhaus Institute for Adult Jewish Studies ([www.lerhaus.org](http://www.lerhaus.org)), Abington, PA

**Founding Rabbi** (2002 to 2018, upon merger with *The New Shul of Philadelphia*).

- Establishment of a unique setting for Jewish learning in which everyone is welcome regardless of denomination or religious background. Study is informed by current academic scholarship as well as advancements in the fields of archeology, linguistics and literature.
- **Rabbi / Teacher** / Central Torah Studies Seminar / Coordination of the *Judaic Lecture Series of Visiting Jewish Scholars*.

Tiferes B'nai Israel (TBI Warrington), Warrington, PA

**Rabbi and Spiritual Leader** (2007 to 2012)

TBI Warrington is the oldest synagogue in continual use in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. The congregational makeup reflects all current streams of the American Jewish community.

- **Rabbinic Director of Hebrew School:** Active and positive coordination with **Head of Hebrew School** in developing strategies to invigorate the learning experience. Served as rabbinic resource to both teachers and children and throughout the overall Hebrew School experience.
- **Pulpit: Served in all aspects of Rabbinic Leadership:** Design and implementation of all lifecycle congregational milestones.
- **Fundraising and Development:** Active participant and leadership in all aspects of synagogue fundraising.

Marc Publishing Company, Lafayette Hill, PA

**Executive Vice President** (1998 to 2007)

- Afforded a rare opportunity for a rabbi to serve in upper management, with an emphasis on Human Resources and Client Relations.
- Ensured that the company ran smoothly, taking an active interest in the wellbeing of employees and in building positive relationships with clients.

**Concurrent:** Admissions Consultant to Deanship: Academy for Jewish Religion, New York, NY

**Consulting and Advisory to AJR Dean of Admissions** (1998 to 1999)

- Distance Learning / Faculty of Homiletics and Practical Rabbinics
- Shabbat / *CSFA Shabbat Pulpit* / this served as a *Teachers College Pastoral Fieldwork* requirement.

**Concurrent:** Moravian College & Theological Seminary, Bethlehem, PA

**Teacher & Jewish Chaplain** (1998 to 2007)

- Served as Associate Chaplain to Moravian Seminary students seeking spiritual and pastoral counseling (all faiths).
- Distance Learning / Instructor, Hebrew Bible Narrative & Text.
- Distance Learning / Teacher, Talmud and related Kabbalistic treatises.

Columbia University Teachers College, New York, NY

**Certification in Counseling Psychology / Pastoral Counseling** (1995 to 1998)

- Building on prior experience as a congregational Rabbi, trained in Counseling Psychology on a deeper level to enhance Rabbinic Pastoral Credentials and clinical skills.
- Focused on counseling individuals and families around issues of bereavement and illness.
- First recipient of the Prestigious Rabbinic Fellowship at The Interfaith Center of New York under the direction of internationally renowned The Very Reverend James Parks Morton.
- Concurrent Practicum and Field Work in 3 Diverse Synagogue settings: **Sutton Place Synagogue (as Interim Rabbi & Counselor)**, CSFA Conservative Synagogue, **Temple Beth Shalom (as Interim Rabbi & Counselor)**.

Temple Beth El, Portland, ME

**Rabbi and Spiritual Leader** (1989 to 1995)

Worked with lay leaders to increase membership and maintain Beth El as the largest Conservative synagogue north of Boston. Increased the participation of intermarried families and worked to ensure that becoming Jewish was made more meaningful and the process of conversion more user-friendly.

- Brought an unprecedented number of life cycle events to the sanctuary for non-members, which in turn influenced these same people to join the community.
- Introduced a post-Oneg program for young people on Friday evenings.
- Initiated a family-learning component within the established B'nai Mitzvah Program.
- Created and nurtured a new Shabbat Saturday morning service for young children, which quickly became of equal interest to the parents.
- Established a Jewish Medical Ethics Study Group for both medical and legal professionals of Southern Maine.
- Restructured '**A New Jewish Class**' as an Introduction/ Conversion to Judaism Course.
- Created a successful **Tikkun Olam** Food Pantry completely (managed by the children in the Religious School for needy families in the community).

## OPERATION MOSES

**Operation Moses, Reconnaissance / IDF Humanitarian Mission/Refugees**, Foreign Operations Branch, **Horn of Africa Operations**, Kiriya, Tel Aviv, Israel, 1981 through 1984, recalled 1985

**Operation Moses, Active Participation**/Participated in 27 separate missions to Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia and Djibouti. Operation Moses was the primary phase in a series of Israeli military/humanitarian operations to airlift the Ethiopian Jewish Community to the State of Israel.

## **EDUCATION**

Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, NY

- Doctor of Divinity DD HC, 2014
- Rabbinic Ordination, 1986
- MA, Jewish Studies and Biblical Literature, 1986

Columbia University Teachers College, New York, NY

- Certificate in Pastoral Counseling, 1997
- Concentration: Pastoral Bereavement and Illness, 1997
- Concurrent Practicum and Field Work in 3 Diverse Synagogue settings: Sutton Place Synagogue, CSFA Conservative Synagogue/Shabbat, Hamptons Jewish Center

University of Illinois, Champaign, IL

- BA, Government and International Relations, 1981
- Visiting Student, Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Israel)
- Woodrow Wilson Award for Overseas Study in Government, American University, American University of Cairo (Egypt)

## **LANGUAGE PROFICIENCIES**

Biblical, Mishnaic and Modern Hebrew

Arabic (Quaranic), Egyptian and Palestinian Dialects

Reading Comprehension in Babylonian Aramaic (Talmud Bavli)

Ethiopian Amharic and Tigrean Amharic

Kenyan and Tanzanian Swahili

## **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Married to Rabbi Robyn Frisch, Currently National Director of the **InterfaithFamily** Fellowship Program/now '18doors' (**fulltime**) and Rabbi of Temple Menorah Keneseth Chai (**part-time**), Philadelphia, PA

Father of three wonderful children, Benjamin (20), Noah (16), Tali (12). Our two younger children attend Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy in Bryn Mawr, PA.