

Rabbi Julie Hilton Danan, Ph.D.

juliedanan@gmail.com

Rabbi, teacher, and writer who synthesizes the best of mind, heart, and spirit

Rigorous academic scholarship with outstanding teaching for all ages and levels of learning
Compassionate pastoral caregiving and counseling with dynamic leadership in outreach and dialogue
Spiritually gifted ritual and worship with organizational vision, creativity, and professionalism

Professional Experience

PLEASANTVILLE COMMUNITY SYNAGOGUE, Pleasantville, New York <i>Rabbi</i>	2015-present
CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL, Chico, California <i>Rabbi</i>	2003-2015
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, Chico, California <i>Lecturer in Comparative Religion, Modern Jewish & Israel Studies</i>	2003-2012
TEXAS LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY, Seguin, Texas <i>Instructor, Department of Theology</i>	2003
CONGREGATION BETH AM (JRF), San Antonio, Texas <i>Rabbi (2000-2003)</i> <i>Student Rabbi (1995-2000)</i> <i>Religious Program Director (1990-1995)</i>	1990-2003
FLORENCE MELTON ADULT MINI-SCHOOL, San Antonio, Texas <i>Instructor</i>	2000-2003
JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER, San Antonio, Texas <i>Judaic Specialist</i>	1994-2000
SAN ANTONIO ASSOCIATION FOR JEWISH EDUCATION (SAAJE), JEWISH FEDERATION OF SAN ANTONIO, San Antonio, Texas <i>Director</i>	1987-1990

Education

-
- University of Texas at Austin, PhD. in Hebrew Studies 2009
 - Dissertation: *The Divine Voice in Scripture: Ruah ha-Kodesh in Rabbinic Literature* (Published electronically by UT Austin)
 - Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California, Completion of Doctoral Coursework 2004-2005
 - Focus of Rabbinic Literature and Culture. Academic interests: Rabbinic Aggadah of the Classic Period, Literary Studies of Bible and Rabbinic texts, Rabbinic Theology
 - Ecumenical Center for Religion and Health, AAPC Pastoral Care Specialist 2000
 - ALEPH Rabbinic Program, Rabbinic Ordination 2000
 - University of Texas at Austin, M.A. in Hebrew Studies (Rabbinic and Biblical Literature) 2000
 - Tel-Aviv University, Ramat Aviv, Israel, B.A. in English Literature, with honors 1982
Additional undergraduate coursework at Bar-Ilan University (Jewish Studies) and Plan II Honors Program, University of Texas at Austin

Rabbi Julie Hilton Danan, Ph.D.

Rabbinic Fellowships

- STAR (Synagogues: Transformation And Renewal) "Good to Great", 2009-2010
- STAR PEER: Professional Education for Excellence in Rabbis, 2004-2005

Personal Website

- Wellsprings of Wisdom <<http://wellspringsofwisdom.com/>> A Jewish Virtual Retreat Center

Selected Publications

- "The ALEPH Program: An Alternative Path to the Rabbinate," published in Keeping the Faith in Rabbinical Education, Avenida Books, (Editor: Rabbi Hayim Herring), 2014
- "Be Happy. Yom Kippur," in Kerem: Creative Explorations in Judaism, Vol. 14, 2014
- "A 'Simple' Devar Torah by Rabbi Julie Danan," Kol ALEPH.org, August, 19, 2014
- "Forgiveness: A Practical View" (sermon), The American Rabbi Anthology, 2008
- "Building a Sukkah of Peace," Journeys: Essays from the Heart of Pastoral Counseling, 2006
- "The Chai Ceremony," featured on: Ohalah.org, myjewishlearning.com, and URJ.org, 2004
- Contributing Editor/Writer: Jewish Family and Life magazine/webzine, 1996-2000
- "Personalizing the Seder," In Every Generation, Greenberg and Roth, 1998
- "Hands on Judaism" and "Sukkah Memories," Jewish Family and Life, Abramowitz & Silverman 1997
- Educational materials for producers of Shalom Sesame, Israel Sesame Street for American Families, 1994-1996
- **Book:** The Jewish Parents' Almanac (Jason Aronson), (Selections are used in the Florence Melton Foundations of Jewish Living Curriculum for parents), 1994
- "E Pluribus Unum," (Combining Sephardic and Ashkenazic traditions), Hadassah Magazine, 1993
- Self-syndicated column, "Babayit: Jewish Home & Family" appeared in two dozen publications, 1988-1993

Dialogue and Community-Building

- "Family of Abraham," Pleasantville, NY, 2016
- Chico Hillel: Board of Directors (2003-2013), Rabbinic Advisor (2013-Present)
- Chico Area Interfaith Council (President, 2006-2007, Vice President, 2005-2006), 2003-Present
- Chico "Celebration of Abraham," (Founded group that brought together hundreds of local Jews, Christians and Muslims over 7 years), 2004-2011
- Jewish Federation of San Antonio: Board of Directors (ex-officio) and Community Relations Council Committee, 2000-2003
- Co-founder (with Imam Nadir Faris), Palestinian-Jewish Dialogue of San Antonio, (Group brought first Palestinian speakers to prominent roles at National CAJE Conference, San Antonio, 2002), 2001-2003
- AAPC Pastoral Care Advisory Board, San Antonio Ecumenical Center for Religion and Health, 2003
- Holocaust Memorial of San Antonio Board, 2001-2003
- Latino/Black/Jewish Dialogue, San Antonio, 2001-2003

Professional Memberships

- OHALAH: Association of Rabbis for Jewish Renewal
- American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC)
- Westchester Board of Rabbis

Rabbi Julie Hilton Danan, Ph.D.

Recent Presentations

- OHALAH Conference, Broomfield, Colorado, with Pastor Peg Shultz-Akerson and Hazan Abbe Lyons, "The Holy Spirit in Judaism and Christianity," 2015
- "A Simple Devar Torah," Remembering Reb Zalman Shabbaton, Broomfield, Colorado, 2014
- Academy for Jewish Religion California, "Ruah Ha-Kodesh Makes a Court Appearance," Lunch and Learn Program, 2014
- Speaker, teacher, liturgical and meditation leader at annual Havurah Shir Hadash Reb Zalman Shabbaton, Ashland, Oregon, 2011-2014. Video: "Bringing Outsiders In," <http://tinyurl.com/mkpwgpe>
- ALEPH Cantorial Program, team-taught with Avraham Danan, Moroccan Jewish Culture & Music, 2011
- Wulfe Lecturer (Scholar-in-Residence), Temple Beth-El, San Antonio, "The Holy Spirit in Judaism," 2010
- Plenary speaker at Ohalah Rabbinic Conference, Boulder, "Ruah Ha-Kodesh in Rabbinic Literature," 2007

Honors/Scholarships/Grants

- Chosen as one of "America's Real Top Rabbis 2012" by MyJewishLearning.com
- STAR Synagogue Innovation Grant to establish "Head, Heart, and Hand" (later Hilton) Fund for Congregation Beth Israel
- National Jewish Outreach Program (NJOP) Community Grants (three grants to date / 2013-2014)
- Jewish Federation of the Sacramento Region Community Development Grants (multiple grants, 2009-2012)
- University of Texas Hebrew Studies Departmental Award (2001)
- Jewish Federation of San Antonio Endowment Fund Scholarships (1995-2000)
- University of Texas Hebrew Studies Levinthal Scholarship (1998)
- Willy and Erna Wolff Memorial Scholarship, Jewish Endowment Foundation of New Orleans (1997)

Personal

- Married to Sephardic Hazzan Avraham Danan, parents of five grown children
- Hobbies and interests: running, yoga, fitness, nature and outdoor sports, travel, reading, beading

Rabbi Julie Hilton Danan, Ph.D.

Personal Statement

I remember my teacher, Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, saying that every human being has spiritual experiences, but for most people they are fleeting moments lost in the rush of events and the passage of time. To really nurture these experiences, to harness their power to inspire inner growth and outer change, we need the vessels that keep them and the disciplines that invoke them on a regular basis. Those spiritual tools have been developed over thousands of years by other seekers, and that is where religion has its spiritual value. In Judaism we have those tools of spiritual renewal in our sea of Torah, our rituals and spiritual practices, our emphasis on values and deeds. As a rabbi and an educator, my service is to make this vast heritage accessible and meaningful to my congregants and students.

The Maharal of Prague compared a person to the Holy Ark in the Temple (Gevurot Hashem 46). For many years, I have been drawn to this image. I strive to be an ark containing Torah, holiness, life, and light, and to share that holy content with others. I want to help others to open that space inside to connect to their own holy spirit and to light the Ner Tamid in their souls.

In my dissertation on *The Divine Voice in Scripture: Ruah ha-Kodesh in Rabbinic Literature*, I learned that our sages of blessed memory understood Torah, Divine Presence, and Holy Spirit as different names for the same experience. Whether I am engaged in teaching Torah, leading with spirit, or offering pastoral care in the divine presence, I am drawing from the same holy source. When Torah is infused with presence and moves with spirit, drawing from the deep places of our tradition and our souls, I call it Depth Torah, and I am passionate about teaching it.

But Torah is not a one-way transmission from teacher to student. In Jewish thought, the meaning is not located in the text alone, nor is it in the reader alone, but it is in relationship between them. It is called “Oral Torah” not just because it was originally memorized and recited aloud, but because it is meant to be spoken, discussed, and debated between people. Meaning is generated and expanded in the interaction between the reader and the text, and even more powerfully between study partners or among a community of learners. And in my classes, I want my students to bring their lives back to the Torah. When Franz Rosenzweig founded the original Lehrhaus Judaica, he based it on the concept of bringing everything back to Torah, “from the periphery to the center, from the outside in.” This is another one of my principles, to help my students relate their own lives back to the Torah and the Torah to their lives.

Rabbi Julie Hilton Danan, Ph.D.

The challenge of the Jewish future is sometimes presented as a conflict between promoting traditional notions of community and offering innovative ways of connecting. Personally, I know that we need both. I love the rhythms and textures of traditional Jewish community at Shabbat morning *minyan*, celebrating the holidays and breaking bread together. Depth Torah can be conveyed, not only from the bimah or in a class, but in personal counseling and spiritual direction, in a pastoral care visit, or schmoozing at a Kiddush lunch.

But we cannot just operate within the four walls of our synagogues and expect everyone to come to us. As Rabbi Kerry Olitsky puts it, more than ever we have to “turn our synagogues inside out.” I love the creativity of finding Jewish spiritual venues in nature, in novel locations, and of course, at home (as described in my book, *The Jewish Parents’ Almanac*). I am excited to get involved in the growing movement of wilderness and environmental Jewish ventures that appeal to those who find their spirituality in nature. I have found more opportunities for informal teaching, connecting, storytelling and spiritual experience in a weekend Shabbaton or retreat than many congregants will receive over months at the synagogue.

As a co-founder of two successful dialogue groups and participant in many others, I have shared the treasures of Jewish life with those of other faiths, for example by opening our “Sukkah of Peace” to sacred gatherings of Jews, Christians and Muslims. At the same time, my interactions with Buddhists, Sufis and Evangelicals have led me to explore and expand the contemplative, mystical, and enthusiastically personal aspects of my own and my congregation’s Jewish life.

Finally, I teach Depth Torah in a new location that is everywhere and nowhere at once: the Internet. The Internet cannot replace face-to-face community or time in nature, but it does provide a miraculous new opportunity to share old wine in the new vessels, to reach out to spiritual seekers wherever they may be in the world. I am currently launching a new website *Wellsprings of Wisdom.com*, designed as a “virtual retreat center” where ancient Jewish symbols from nature become gateways to personal growth and action. Visitors are invited to immerse themselves in the Torah of Mother Earth through a beautiful online tapestry of images, recordings, texts and shared personal stories.

Torah is everywhere. The Ark is portable. I just keep seeking more ways to learn it, live it, and share it.