

**RABBI JONATHAN KLEIN**  
6425 Elgin St, Los Angeles, CA 90042  
(310) 770-5555  
[rabbi@ravklein.com](mailto:rabbi@ravklein.com)

**Purpose Statement: To serve a Jewish community that embraces the sacred, embodies intergenerational Jewish life, and celebrates the inherent worth and dignity of all.**

---

## PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

---

Mission-driven organizational and communal leader with a track record of success engaging and strengthening diverse communities as a Hillel and community rabbi, nonprofit leader and synagogue executive director. Skilled at motivating and diplomatically supporting diverse Jewish communal stakeholders. Gifted listener and empathic rabbi who celebrates the gifts and talents of others. Adept at building support for—and achieving—initiatives that further Jewish life and robust community.

---

## LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

---

### Community Rabbi

**June 1997– Present**

[www.ravklein.com](http://www.ravklein.com), Los Angeles, CA

Communal leader supporting the Jewish life of hundreds of Angelenos. Primarily by referral and frequently with unaffiliated families for whom I serve as their rabbi, I regularly perform lifecycle ceremonies, particularly weddings, funerals, baby-namings, and B'nai Mitzvah. Significant areas of innovation and achievement include:

- Initiated and led a guitar-led monthly, home-based minyan (Shabbat service group) for Northeast Los Angeles (Pasadena, Eagle Rock, Highland Park, etc), the “Final Friday Minyan.”
- Wedding officiant through Unorthodox Celebrations and by word of mouth, excited to perform multiracial and LGBTQ+ weddings. Open to interfaith weddings as well.
- Regular funeral officiant for Mt Sinai Memorial Park and Mortuary and for Hollywood Forever.
- Family rabbi performing multiple lifecycle rituals (Bar Mitzvah, funeral, etc) over years of relationship.
- Authored a “Promise to our Planet,” a pledge to protect the environment, used regularly at Beth Chayim Chadashim and modified for use weekly at Throop Unitarian Universalist Church in Pasadena.
- Lead annual Tu Bishvat Seder at Throop Unitarian Universalist Church, part of “30 Days for the Earth.”
- Led communal High Holiday services at Harvard, Maryland, USC (prior to working there), and CSUN.
- Developer/creator of original downloadable and free Jewish liturgy: Birkat Hamazon, Shabbat Evening and Morning services, Upsherin (first haircut), baby-naming/Brit Milah texts, etc., for personalization.

### Rabbinic Chair

**October 2019 – Present**

**Jewish Veg, Los Angeles**

As one of a handful of rabbis committed to a plant-based diet and animal welfare, I serve as rabbi and officiant for this LA-based Jewish animal-friendly organization. Significant areas of innovation and achievement include:

- Annually officiate vegan Passover Seder, Tu Bishvat Seder, Sukkot, Chanukah, and other holidays.
- Developed source sheets on *Tzaar Ba'alei Chayim* (animal suffering) and animal welfare concerns.
- Annual officiant, in partnership with my nonprofit Faith Action for Animals, of a Cruelty-Free Kapparot ritual in the Pico-Robertson Jewish neighborhood of Los Angeles, and leader of organizing efforts to curb the use of live animals for this ritual meant to remove sin from penitents before Yom Kippur.
- Speaker/Teacher on animal concerns and outlawing Kapparot at the Shamayim Institute's annual retreat.

### Executive Director

**December 2018 – February 2020**

**Congregation Beth Chayim Chadashim, Los Angeles**

Position eliminated due to budgetary constraints

As an ally at the world's first lesbian and gay-established synagogue during a year of rabbinical leadership transition, I played a central staff role in maintaining and building relationships with the congregation's predominantly LGBTQ+ members, simultaneously enriching my understanding of congregant needs and congregational board structures. Selected areas of innovation and achievement include:

- Provided calm pastoral support to anxious congregants during a year of congregational transition from a 25-year revered rabbi to an interim rabbi.
- Filled rabbinical and cantorial Shabbat service-leading needs on occasion.
- Established BCC's Transgender Havurah and co-created a Vegan Havurah with a congregant, the latter being the only known Jewish vegan congregational group in North America.
- Implemented a "board call list" to personalize leadership's relationship with congregants.
- Overseeing/Directing the congregation's most successful fundraiser in its 48-year history.
- Created the congregation's first board-approved development plan.
- Envisioned and implemented new accounting and payroll systems, ensuring compliance with the law.
- Established HR policies surrounding sick and vacation days and an anti-sexual harassment policy.
- Hired, supervised, and in one instance terminated staff.
- Successfully found new funding sources, including grant moneys for Tu BiShvat and a high-end printer donation to save the congregation \$7,000+ annually in monthly printer costs.
- Envisioned and implemented a more effective IT system: Migration to Shulcloud and to cloud storage, email migration to Gmail, allowing us to discontinue a costly IT service contract.

**Executive Director  
Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE)**

**April 2009 – November 2018**

I left my previous advocacy position due to an opportunity to transform a small faith-based organization into a leading force in Los Angeles and later Orange County social justice work. After establishing a clear and distinct mission with our board, to "educate, organize, and mobilize the faith community to accompany workers and their families in their struggle for good jobs, dignity, and justice," I achieved several accomplishments, among them:

- Built new and ongoing relationships with hundreds of diverse stakeholders: LA County faith leaders, justice-centered congregants, workers (many for whom—Jewish and non-Jewish—I became "their rabbi"), top labor union leaders, donors, grant officers, many labor-associated attorneys, etc.
- Provided numerous invocations and sermons/presentations at synagogues and churches, including invocations at the labor movement's monthly meetings.
- Founded the Black/Jewish Justice Alliance with a Black colleague (SCLC of Southern California, 2013).
- Grew CLUE's revenues from \$374,000 (2009) to over \$1 million (2018). This enabled:
  - Program Growth: Created an educational signature event, the annual "CLUE InGathering."
  - Staff Growth: Doubled staff, established a clear organizational chart with a middle management; hired, managed/supervised, and terminated several staff. Also hired CLUE's first Development Director, a first nationally for any local faith-based worker justice organization.
  - Geographic Growth: Expanded reach from exclusively LA County to include Las Vegas, and added an office in Orange County. Created a separate annual event to support Orange County organizing.
- Last grant secured before departure: \$155,000.
- Revitalized board and infrastructure from nearly the ground up, adding greater religious, ethnic, and gender diversity, overcoming a previous reputation as anti-LGBTQ.
- Created annual development plan (events, grant writing, major gifts, year-end appeal, etc.).
- Created accounting and payroll systems; acquired/maintained donor/member database.
- Created a vision-centered moniker to define and market CLUE: "Building a Just and Sacred Society"
- Created and later hired others to create newsletters and maintain ongoing social media presence.
- Led CLUE through its first strategic planning process (now being fulfilled).

**Community Organizer, Development Director  
Progressive Jewish Alliance, Los Angeles**

**February 2008 – April 2009**

I left Hillel to focus on *Tikkun Olam* (justice work), initially as a part-time organizer. After my arrival, my fundraising successes at Hillel led me to become full time as PJA's Development Director. Achievements include:

- Built impactful relationships with major donors, including building a lasting friendship with one donor who committed to \$75,000/year for three years to fund a leadership program.
- Shepherded active committees and empowered lay leaders in our member-driven organization.

- As Organizer, advocated for economic justice and marriage equality. As Development Director, raised individual donations (including major gifts), grants, and directed planning for the annual fundraiser.

**Allan and Ruth Ziegler Rabbinical Director  
University of Southern California Hillel, Los Angeles**

**July 2000 – May 2008**

Served as campus rabbi to hundreds of university students, faculty, staff, and parents, cultivating student leaders in order to establish a rich, varied Jewish life on campus. I was the principal spokesperson in the community for Jewish life at USC. Among my achievements:

- As campus rabbi, led communal weekly Shabbat services, with liturgy I developed for multi-denominational communities, and led High Holy Days annually. Provided weekly on-campus text study.
- As chief fundraiser, secured \$500,000 from a private donor; created “USC Hillel Trustees” program.
- As administrator, managed operations and supervised staff.
- Brought Jewish students over six spring breaks to Montevideo, Uruguay (2002-4) and to New Orleans (2006-8), creating and implementing a curriculum focused on *Tzedakah* and on Black/Jewish relations, respectively.
- Led four Israel trips through Birthright Israel.

**Director  
UAHC College Education Department (KESHER), New York**

**July 1997 – June 2000**

Chose youth engagement with college students as my first rabbinical role in order to further develop my work with young people and to express gratitude for my warm camp, NFTY, and college experiences—including my UCLA role in creating and co-leading the Reform Havurah at UCLA’s Hillel. In this capacity, I created, developed, and implemented the Reform Movement’s North American college program, encouraging student engagement in Reform Jewish life. Significant areas of innovation and achievement include:

- Met with hundreds of undergraduate and graduate students on virtually every major college campus and Reform Movement camp, leading Reform worship and lecturing on nineteen campuses.
- Renamed the UAHC’s College Education Department to be KESHER (“connection”), to help students better identify with the Reform Movement.
- Created the first online downloadable liturgical resources (i.e. digital prayer books, song sheets, etc) for use on campuses and worldwide at [www.keshernet.com](http://www.keshernet.com) (now defunct).
- Wrote “Making a KESHER: A Guide to Reform Jewish Programming on Campus” and edited “Staying In Touch: A Congregational Guide to Better Serve Our College Students”
- Co-led college student trips to Germany and to Israel through the first Birthright Israel trip.
- Directed annual KESHER Conventions, inviting guest speakers and arranging logistics
- Hired and supervised the Assistant Director and Secretary
- Managed the distribution of grant funds to more than twenty campuses annually.

**CIVIC LEADERSHIP**

**Rabbinic Associations**

Member, Los Angeles Board of Rabbis	2000 – Present
Member, Pacific Association of Reform Rabbis	2000 - Present
Member, Central Conference of Reform Rabbis	1997 - Present

**Civic and Political Engagement**

Candidate, Los Angeles County Central Committee, Assembly District 51 - Democratic	Present
Commissioner (Mayoral Appointment), Los Angeles City Commission on Revenue Generation	2018 – Present

**Nonprofit Organizations**

Executive Director/Board Secretary, HOPE for All: Helping Others Prosper Economically	2019 – Present
Board Director, Interfaith Worker Justice	2016 – Present
Founder/Director, Faith Action for Animals	2012 – Present

## Previous Civic Engagement

Delegate (Elected), California Democratic Party, Assembly District 51	2017 – 2019
Union Board Member, American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California	2014 – 2018
Board Member, Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace	2010 – 2018
Our Faith Matters, an Initiative of PATH: People Assisting the Homeless	2012 – 2015
Environmental Commission, Speaker of the Assembly Karen Bass	2007 – 2010
Executive Committee, Board of Rabbis of Southern California	2007 – 2008
Regional Council, Progressive Jewish Alliance	2007 – 2008
Board Member, Coalition for the Environment and Jewish Life of Southern California (COEJL-SC)	2006 – 2008
Advisory Board, USC Casden Institute for the Study of the Jewish Role in American Life	2003 – 2008

---

## AWARDS

---

- Southern Christian Leadership Conference’s Thomas Gilgore Prophetic Witness Award (2019).
- Joe Hill Community Organizing Award, LA/OC Organizing Committee (July 21, 2010).
- Sole Honoree, USC Hillel Annual Awards Dinner, (June 8, 2008).

---

## ARTICLES

---

- “Trans Jews are Here, at BCC!” [BCC Newsletter](#), p.6 (July-August, 2019).
- “Celebrating the Legacy of Lisa and Tracy: BCC’s 2019 Vision Awards” [BCC Newsletter](#) (May-June 2019).
- “(Shhh)abbat Morning Minyan...BCC’s Best-Kept Secret!” [BCC Newsletter](#) (March-April 2019).
- “In Praise of Tikkun Olam” [Jewish Journal](#) (July 20-26, 2018).
- “Compassionate Kapparot: Use Coins, Not Chickens” [Jewish Journal](#) (Sept 23, 2014).
- “Does Your Nanny Get a Lunch Break?” [Sh’m’a: A Journal of Jewish Ideas](#) (April 2011).
- “I Love You, Carnivore” [Jewish Journal](#) (March 2, 2006)
- “Understanding Our Origins From Our Personal Place In Life” [Reform Judaism.Org: Jewish Life in Your Life](#) (Oct 1998)

---

## EDUCATION

---

### Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion—New York, NY

Rabbinic Ordination (1997, New York); Master of Arts in Hebrew Literature (1995, Los Angeles)  
Rabbinical Thesis: “Master of the Universe: Barukh of Medzibezh and the Hasidic Doctrine of the Zaddik”

### University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)—Los Angeles, CA

Bachelor of Arts, History (1992)  
Entered with Biochemistry; finished in History with emphases in Latin American and Early Christian History

---

## SKILLS AND PASSIONS

---

- Prayer, lifecycle, sermons, pastoral counseling, creative liturgy, Torah study, Hebrew, Torah *leining* (chanting).
- Song-leading, guitar, listening to music.
- Advocacy: Economic justice, interfaith relations, Black/Jewish relations, animal welfare.
- Computer networking and software.
- Spiritual counseling; teaching Jewish sources to Jews and non-Jews alike.
- Advocating, Educating, Organizing, Mobilizing, Public Speaking.
- Computers and Information Technology.
- Stamp Collecting.

Personal Statement: Rabbi Jonathan Klein  
[rabbi@ravklein.com](mailto:rabbi@ravklein.com), (310) 770-5555

For blessing and not for curse  
For abundance and not for famine  
For life and not for death

לברכה ולא לקללה  
לשבע ולא לרזון  
לחיים ולא למוות

--Passover and Shemini Atzeret Liturgy

These words taught to me musically amidst the redwoods at Camp Swig when I was young have come to define much of my worldview. So much so that I make every effort to attend services on Passover and Shemini Atzeret just to recite these words from the festival liturgy.

**Livracha v'lo lik'lala: For blessing and not for curse.** We can embody, through deed and energy, the blessings bestowed upon us merely by being born. Unfortunately, we also live amid a culture of curses, in which we are given license to denigrate others who differ from us. We decide which way we wish to live our lives. As a congregational rabbi, I can help people choose to celebrate life's blessings and to deal with what may feel like curses or struggles in their lives.

**L'sova v'lo l'razon: For abundance and not for famine.** Metaphorically and quite literally, "undernourished" and "malnourished" people surround us. Each of us needs enrichment, removal of any obstacles to fully live into our humanity, optimism in the face of hardship, a celebration of all that we have, no matter how much or how little. Ben Zoma asks, "Who is rich? One who is happy with their portion." My heart breaks by others' hardships; as a rabbi, I want to repair such inequalities that leave some rich and others poor, in body and in spirit. Undergirding this is the truth that all are *B'tzelem Elohim*, created in the divine image, that no one should be left behind.

**L'chayim v'lo l'mavet: For life and not for death.** We can choose life, in every sense! Depression and nihilism hold us back, but we can decide to make the most of our limited lifespans. Every day is a miracle. I have learned that quality of life matters more than quantity of years; imagining possibilities regardless of the realities will enable us to overcome the forces within and without that seem to work against us.

I choose blessing, abundance, and life in how I live as well as how I serve as a rabbi. I choose to affirm people for their contributions, celebrate their accomplishments, remind them of their inherent worth when they disappoint themselves or others, and ask myself, "What can I learn from this person, created *B'tzelem Elohim*?"

And yet, I know that plenty of others have either chosen or have been handed the opposite through life circumstances. So many struggle to see goodness and compassion in this world. Sometimes this is a way of making sense of the fragility of our human condition. Some of us

sustain emotional injuries through challenging life experiences. We can become bitter, and sometimes this challenges our relationships with others.

As a rabbi I have been surrounded by both life-affirming people and those who hurt others. All of us contain elements of both approaches. As we all learn along the way, life is simultaneously beautiful and hard. For me, less than a year after I married my beloved thought partner and life-affirming wife, a health scare forced me to take my mortality seriously. And just as I started my pathway to full recovery, my professional life was suddenly upended and I found myself seeking new opportunities. In the midst of these hardships, surrounded by loving family and cherished community, I learned that a reliance on blessing, abundance, and life can transcend nearly any challenge. Our High Holiday liturgy says as much: “*T’shuvah, T’filah, and Tzedakah* (i.e. repentance, prayer, and righteous acts of charity—Jewish acts that lead to a meaningful existence) avert the severity of the decree.” We can cope with whatever is thrown at us by creating a life-affirming reality for ourselves.

Synagogues, too, carry the joys of their members and also at times their difficult life experiences that can challenge their ability to bring blessing, abundance, and life—joyful Judaism—to congregants and potential congregants. I go into congregational life with twenty years of professional organizational work, a passion for institution-building, a love for the sacred, a thirst for creating the next generation of Jews, and an understanding that healthy Jewish institutional-building may take time, but that like the helix that goes round and round with incremental advancement, each little step forward is real progress and cause for celebration.

The sanctuary, the school, youth group, nursery schools—these synagogue spaces have always been the center of my Jewish life and service. My wonderful year of growth as Executive Director at Beth Chayim Chadashim with opportunities to serve congregants in myriad ways left me pining for more congregational work. Previously, I had chosen the pathway of USC Hillel and then advocacy work so as to ensure that my three remarkable children could create their own Jewish journeys and so that I could bring them to synagogue on their own terms. Along the way, Rabbi Laura Geller—who served nearly twenty years in both Hillel and organizational work and then another twenty-plus years as a congregational rabbi—taught me that rabbis hold one of the few renaissance jobs, their training allowing them to take on many roles. In fact, synagogues offer rabbis the rare professional opportunity to exercise many skills simultaneously, a rewarding prospect for any creative person. Our body’s cells largely replace themselves once a decade; like the seven and a half year cycle of reading Talmud, I, too, am ready for my rabbinate to be renewed, seasoned by experience, reinvigorated by a new, multifaceted responsibility to serve congregants and to revitalize the Jewish people. Synagogues are the crucibles of creativity in which the fullness of my curiosities and capabilities can thrive. Teaching children and young adults, officiating at ceremonies, social justice, promoting programs with excitement, working with a team to create *kedushah* (holiness)—my past experiences have prepared me for this sacred congregational duty. Through my recent

work at BCC, I consider pulpit work the next and hopefully ultimate step in my professional journey.

We need our sanctuaries full of people in order to share our traditions, convey our values, and ensure a Jewish future. Sadly, some congregations are struggling with declining membership. However, whether it be modeled after the URJ's vision of [Audacious Hospitality](#) or notions of Radical Inclusivity, our synagogues actually offer things that handheld devices simply cannot provide: Community, warmth, compassion, depth. After twenty-five years of watching Hillels and synagogues rely on cyber community-building, and observing my kids' incessant screen time (and my own for that matter), it is as clear as day that while the internet is an important way to reach potential members, Judaism thrives when we apply a little elbow grease and actively recruit potential congregants through our excitement and energy, bringing them into the *Gan Yeladim* (kindergarten), *Beit Sefer* (elementary school), *Beit Midrash* (adult learning), *Beit Knesset* (sanctuary), even the Zocalo (Spanish for the public square)—to tap the passion of the unaffiliated too! Called by the urgency of this era, seasoned by my years of meaningful work as a rabbi, I am ready to take on the mantle of congregational leadership, to bring Judaism alive and share its delights.

For blessing and not for curse  
For abundance and not for famine  
For life and not for death

לברכה ולא לקללה  
לשבע ולא לרזון  
לחיים ולא למוות