

Rabbi Mordecai Finley, Ph.D.

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C.V. - rev. Feb 2012

Personal Background

Born in December, 1954, and raised southern California, grew up with Conservative Jewish affiliation at the Compton Jewish Community Center and Temple Beth Shalom, Long Beach, California. Married to Meirav Shevah Finley. Four children, Levi Yitzchak (b. 1980), Kayitz (b. 1982), Shulamit (b. 1994), Avigayil (b. 1997)

Employment/Teaching Experience.

A. Congregational Experience

Founding Rabbi

Ohr HaTorah Synagogue, Mar Vista, A Traditional-Progressive Congregation. December 1993-present

Co-Rabbi

Makom Ohr Shalom, A Synagogue Celebrating the Jewish Traditions of Spirituality and Meditation. June 1994-June 2002

Assistant Rabbi

Stephen S. Wise Temple, Los Angeles, California. Full range of clergy duties, including pulpit, adult education, *bikkur cholim* program, young adult programs, confirmation, pastoral counseling, creating and implementing programs (e.g., family Bar/Bat Mitzvah education, regular Shabbat Morning Minyan, etc.). July 1988 - December 1993

Acting Rabbi

Irvine Jewish Community, Irvine, California. Part-time position -- Full range of clergy duties. July 1984 - July 1988. (while a doctoral student on leave of absence from Hebrew Union College)

Acting Rabbi

Center for Early Jewish Education, Thousand Oaks, California. Part-time position, focusing in pulpit, life cycle, and adult education. July 1983-May 1986. (while a doctoral student on leave of absence from Hebrew Union College)

Hillel Rabbinic Intern

Hillel, University of Southern California. Programming for undergraduates, teaching, counseling. 1984-85

Student Rabbi

Congregation Beth Israel and Congregation Ahavat Israel, Boise, Idaho.
Student pulpit through HUC-JIR
July 1982 - May 1984

Student Rabbi

Irvine Jewish Community, Irvine, California. Student pulpit through
HUC-JIR September - June 1981-82

Camp Counselor and Bus Driver

JCA Camp, Jewish Federation of Long Beach, California. Summer, 1981

Judaica and Hebrew Teacher

Temple Beth Shalom (Conservative). Long Beach, California. 1977-1980

Senior High Youth Group Advisor

Orange County Temple Youth (OCTY). Temple Beth Shalom, Santa Ana,
California 1975-76

B. Faculty / Administrative Positions

Professor of Jewish Thought (Liturgy, Mysticism, Jewish Ethics and

Professional Skills; various courses in Spiritual Psychology; also taught
Talmud and Midrash) Academy for Jewish Religion, California Campus.
Fall 2000 to present.

Provost, AJR/CA May, 2003- 2008 (Focused on curriculum development in
Liturgy and Professional Skills areas)

President, Academy for Jewish Religion, California Campus of the. May 2001-
May 2003

Adjunct Faculty, USC School of Law. Jewish Law and Ethics. Spring 2002 –
2004, Fall 2007.

American Jewish University (University of Judaism), Department of Continuing
Education. Courses in Spirituality, Jewish Thought and Rabbinics, etc.
Regularly 1988 to present.

Faculty/Fellow, Shalom Hartman Institute, Jerusalem. 2000-2003

Wexner Heritage Foundation, Instructor in Bible and other topics
1994-present.

Lehman Fellow, Brandeis Bardin Institute. 2002-03; 1999-2000. Scholar
Faculty, 1992-95

Lecturer in Rabbinics-Social Ethics, Graduate School, Hebrew Union College –
Jewish Institute of Religion, Los Angeles Campus, 1998-2000

Tefillah Program Specialist, School of Rabbinic Studies, University of Judaism,
1998-99

Adjunct Assistant Professor, HUC-JIR School of Undergraduate Studies.
Holocaust and other courses. 1992 – 1996

Adjunct Professor, Loyola Law School, Los Angeles. Jewish Law and Ethics
Spring 1996.

Teaching Assistant, University of Judaism--Rabbinic School. Talmud--
Winter/Spring 1994

Lecturer (while doctoral student) Jewish Studies 211 (Holocaust), USC/HUC-
JIR September 1988 - May 1991(one semester per year)

Substitute and Visiting Lecturer. University of Southern California. Includes
lectures given in following classes: "Judaism and Christian Beginnings"
"Old Testament" "Introduction to Judaism" September 1987 - May 1991.

Havurah Leader. Several Havurot in Los Angeles area. Topics taught include:
Talmud, Bible, Advanced Hebrew, Siddur, Hasidism, Jewish History,
Pietistic Literature. August 1983 - June, 1990

Instructor. Los Angeles Metivta (Los Angeles Hillel Council). Subjects Taught:
Cycles of Jewish Observance, Weekly Torah portion. September 1986 -
July 1988

Instructor. Los Angeles Hebrew High School, Talmud, Siddur, Biblical Genres.
January-June 1985, January - June 1988

All University Merit Fellowship Teaching Fellow. USC School of Religion.
Assisted in preparation and presentation of one course per year, and was
visiting lecturer in several courses. Classes taught or lectured in:
Introduction to Judaism, Introduction to Islam, Contemporary
Theological Ethics, Jewish Mysticism, Jewish History, Social Theory,
Sociology of Religion. September 1983 - May 1987

Administrative Intern to the Dean, HUC-JIR, Los Angeles. Summer, 1983

Lecturer on Judaism in Catholic High Schools. Pilot program for teaching
Judaism to Catholic High School students, through National Council of
Christians and Jews, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, and Wilshire
Boulevard Temple. 1982-83

Addresses – Visiting Scholar – Scholar in Residence (selected)

Kabbalah: Journey into the Cosmic Soul. The Guibord Center – Religion Inside
Out. September 2011

The Real Housewives of the Bible – Rebecca. AJU Whizin Center for Continuing Education November 2011

Speaker and co-leader, *The Universal Freedom Seder*, April 2011, with Imam Jihad Turk and Reverend Dr. Gwynne Guibord and others.

Frequent Lecturer, The Valley Beth Shalom College of Jewish Studies. e.g. *The Kabbalah of Creation*, November 2011; *The God of the Mystics*, January 2006

Frequent Lecturer, C.G. Jung Institute, Los Angeles. e.g., *The History, Theory and Practice of Mussar*, 2011; *Imagining the Demonic: Gnostic Tales from the Jewish Mystical Tradition*, 2010; *Torah Study and Depth Psychology* 2005.

Speaker, *Finding Light in the Shadow of Death*, Sinai Temple, February 2009.

Speaker, *The Legacy of the 10 Commandments: Ancient Text, Modern Contexts.* UCLA Center for Jewish Studies. 2001

Major Address, Plenary Session, “Synagogue Transformation” Wexner Heritage Foundation Retreat. San Francisco, July 2000.

Visiting Scholar, Harold M. Schulweis Institute, Valley Beth Shalom. “The God I Believe in”. October-November 1998.

Keynote Speaker, Wexner Heritage Foundation, Alumni Retreat. Palisades, NY, December 1997,

Scholar in Residence, Congregation Shir Hadash, Los Gatos, California. February 1995

Scholar Faculty UAHC Summer Kallah on Jewish Spirituality, Santa Cruz Topics: Rabbis and Liturgy 1991-1995,

Keshet Program--Institute for Jewish High School Seniors San Diego Bureau of Jewish Education 1993, 1994; 1996

Scholar in Residence, Brandeis-Bardin Institute, 1994; 1992; 1989

(In addition to Scholar in Residence programs, I often speak at Federation educational and fundraising events, and a variety of other forums, panels, etc.)

Community Service (summary)

Board of Directors, Israel-Christian Nexus; co-founder with Rabbi Stan Levy and Rabbi Stephen Robbins of the Academy for Jewish Religion, California Campus; served on the Resolutions Committee of the Central Conference of American Rabbis; Steering Committee of the National Conference on Continuing Rabbinic Education; Sustaining Education

Committee of the Central Conference of American Rabbis; the Social Action Committee of the Los Angeles Board of Rabbis; the Executive Committee of the Los Angeles Regional Board of the American Jewish Committee; on the Advisory Board of the Council on Jewish Life of the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles, among other positions.

Education

Doctor of Philosophy in Religion-Social Ethics (Ph.D.)

School of Religion, University of Southern California 1983-1988, 1990-1992. Date of Degree: May 1992 Dissertation Title: "The Jurisprudence of Personal Status in Reform Judaism: An Essay in Normative Hermeneutics."

Rabbinic Ordination

Rabbinic School, Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion September 1981 - May 1983, September 1988 - May 1990. Ordination: May 1990. Thesis Title: "Authority and Canon in the Thought of Three Reform Theologians."

Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters

Rabbinic School. Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion. 1983

Visiting Graduate Student

Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel, 1980-1981

Bachelor of Arts

School of Religion, University of Southern California, 1980

Hebrew Ulpan

Kibbutz Mizra, Israel, January - August 1977

Attended University of Maryland, Okinawa Extension (while serving with 3rd Marine Division); Orange Coast College and Saddleback College (while serving with 3rd Marine Air Wing in El Toro, California), Long Beach City College (after discharge from military and before transferring to USC)

Accepted to the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis (declined appointment)

Military Service Schools

U. S. Marine Corps 1973-1976

Public School Education

Anaheim, Compton, and Lynwood, California

Publications (selected - does not include article of popular interest published in local Jewish publications)

Article on Torah portion "Toldot" in Jeffrey Salkin, Text Messages: A Torah Commentary for Teens. Jewish Lights, 2012.

"A Clearing" CCAR Journal: The Reform Jewish Quarterly Winter 2011.

Essays in Hara Person, ed., Voices of Torah: A Treasury of Rabbinic Gleanings on the Weekly Portions, Holidays and Special Shabbatot CCAR Press, 2011

Essay in Jeffrey Salkin, ed., The Modern Men's Torah Commentary: New Insights from Jewish Men on the 54 Weekly Torah Portions. Jewish Lights, 2009.

Essay in Jeffrey Salkin, ed., A Dream of Zion: American Jews Reflect on Why Israel Matter to Them. Jewish Lights Publishing, 2007

"Communal Conflict and the Four 'C's", Olam Magazine, Spring 2005

"Belonging" Shma – A Journal of Jewish Responsibility January 2003. (Article on the training of rabbis and cantors).

Article on Torah portion "Teruma" in Joel Lurie Grishaver and Stuart Kelman, Learn Torah With 5766 Torah Annual. Alef Design Group, 1999.

"Early Reform Philosophy" in Daniel Frank and Oliver Leaman, eds., The Routledge History of Philosophy. Volume II: Jewish Philosophy. Routledge, 1997.

Article on Torah portion "Chukkat" in Joel Lurie Grishaver and Stuart Kelman, Learn Torah With 1994-95 Torah Annual. Alef Design Group, 1996.

Co-editor with S.M. Passamaneck, Jewish Law Association Studies, vol VII, Paris Conference Volume, 1994.

"Shame and Teshuva" Teshuva 1:1, Fall 1992

"Brit Milah Issues in Modern Orthodoxy and Reform Judaism" in Lewis M. Barth ed, Berit Mila in the Reform Context, Brit Mila Board of Reform Judaism, 1990.

"Shemini Atzeret: A Time for Reflection" in Jewish Calendar Magazine, October, 1988.

Research Associate, Naomi Passachoff, Basic Judaism for Young People, vols I - III. Behrman House Publishers, 1986.

"Between Historicity and Ultimacy: The Rabbinic Treatment of Prayer."
Nitzanim, Spring 1981, Hebrew University, Jerusalem

Book Reviews:

Dana Kaplan, ed., Platforms and Prayerbooks, in CCAR Journal, Summer 2005.

Peter J. Haas, Morality After Auschwitz, in CCAR Journal, Winter 1993.

James Kugel' On Being a Jew in Moment Magazine October, 1991.

Sol Roth's Halakha and Politics in Religious Studies Review, vol. 16, #3, July 1990.

Miscellaneous

Occasional Columnist, The Huffington Post 2010 to present

Actor, "Tribal Leader" in motion picture, Alejo Mosun, writer/director Hirokin 2011

Interviewee in Mark Wexler, director, documentary How to Live Forever 2009

Actor, "Undercard Fighter", in motion picture, David Mamet, writer/director, Redbelt. 2008.

Actor, "Rabbi" in motion picture, Rodrigo Garcia and Jared Rappaport, directors, Fathers and Sons. 2005

Actor "Cadre Operator", in motion picture, David Mamet, writer/director Spartan 2004.

Featured Interviewee in Producer Kate Coe, Director Ken Short, Documentary In Search of Angels, with Harold Bloom, Sophy Burnham, Mordecai Finley, Rickie Lee Jones, Tony Kushner . Perigree Entertainment, 1999.

Featured Interviewee in David Connolly, In Search of Angels. Perigree Trade, 1994

Fellowships, Honors, Awards, Other Recognitions

Newsweek Magazine:

One of the 50 Most Influential Rabbis in the Nation, 2007; One of the top 25 Pulpit Rabbis in the Nation, 2008

Fellow and Teaching Faculty, Shalom Hartman Institute, Jerusalem

Teaching courses to lay leaders at Summer Institute 2002-03

Nathan Levey Award for Excellence in Judaic Studies. Hebrew Union College
– Jewish Institute of Religion, 1992. (for doctoral dissertation)

Buzz Magazine Los Angeles

One of One Hundred Coolest People in Los Angeles, 1998.

Commencement Speaker

The Graduate School, University of Southern California. Topic: "Magic Carpets in a World Gotten Old" June 1989

Josephine De Karman Fellowship

Josephine De Karman Fellowship Trust "Exceptional ability and serious purpose . . . in the humanities." 1987 - 88

All University Predoctoral Merit Teaching Fellowship.

University of Southern California Graduate School (Highest Academic Award /Fellowship at the University) 1983-1987

Rockwell Dennis Hunt Award: Outstanding Graduate Student.

University of Southern California Graduate School. "USC Graduate Student most representative of the University's academic tradition and most likely to represent the University with honor as an alumnus."1984

Grancell Award for Outstanding Scholarship.

HUC-JIR Los Angeles. 1983

Spiegel Fellowship for Research in Jewish Ethics

HUC-JIR - Los Angeles, 1983-85

Sulzberger Award in Homiletics.

HUC-JIR - Los Angeles. 1983

Nathan Levey Award for Outstanding Student in Rabbinic Literature.

HUC-JIR - Los Angeles. 1983

Dov Bin Nun Award for Outstanding Achievement in Hebrew Literature

HUC-JIR - Los Angeles. 1982

Kaelter Fellowship.

HUC-JIR - Los Angeles. 1981-82

American Friends of Hebrew University Fellowship.

For Graduate Studies at the Hebrew University. 1980-81

Charles Brown Fellowship for Study in Israel

For Graduate Studies at the Hebrew University. Jewish Federation Council of Los Angeles. 1980-81

Phi Beta Kappa.

University of Southern California. 1980

Graduation Summa Cum Laude.

University of Southern California. 1980 (4.0/4.0 G.P.A.)

Graduation with High Honors.

School of Religion, University of Southern California, 1980

Senior Honors Thesis: "The Political Thought of Martin Buber"

Humanities Division Creative Scholarship Award.

College of Letters, Arts and Sciences

University of Southern California, 1980

For Senior Thesis: "The Political Thought of Martin Buber"

Merit Scholarship.

University of Southern California. 1977-80

California State Scholarship.

University of Southern California. 1977-1980

Languages:

- Hebrew: Reading, Writing and Speaking knowledge; Aramaic: Reading knowledge; German: Reading knowledge; Spanish: Reading knowledge.

Military Service**United States Marine Corps**

1973-76 (Honorable Discharge)

Jewish Lay Leader,

3d Marine Division, Okinawa, Japan. Jewish Welfare Board 1974-75

Meritorious Promotions

to Sergeant, Corporal, and Private First Class.

Main Military Occupational Specialty:

Legal Clerk-Court Reporter; Japanese Jurisdiction; Administrative Discharges.

Marine of the Month

3d Marine Aircraft Wing, El Toro, California December, 1975 (out of over 12,000 personnel)

Miscellaneous

Expert Rifleman, Advanced Course in Anti Guerilla Warfare Tactics, National Defense Service Medal

Notable Hobbies/Pastimes

Brazilian Jiu Jitsu (Brown Belt)

Rifle and Shotgun Target Shooting

Founded and conducts a monthly Philosophy Club: *Sophos: The Sherman Oaks Philosophical Society* (through "MeetUp.com")