

Rabbi Sharon Cohen

Rabbi Sharon Cohen was born in Miami, Florida, and spent her teen years in Chattanooga, Tennessee. As an undergraduate, Rabbi Cohen was a double major in History and Jewish and Near Eastern Studies at Washington University in St. Louis. She earned a Masters of Hebrew Letters from the University of Judaism (now American Jewish University) in Los Angeles, and a Masters of Rabbinic Literature and Rabbinic Ordination at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York where she was awarded the Albert Pappenheim Award in Professional Skills.

Following Rabbinical School, Rabbi Cohen served three years as an Assistant Rabbi at Congregation Beth El in Phoenix, Arizona, and became the first female Rabbi at Ohavay Zion Synagogue in Lexington, Kentucky. After nine years at Ohavay Zion, Rabbi Cohen took a break from the rigors of the congregational rabbinate to pursue marriage and family while concentrating professionally on Pastoral Care and Chaplaincy. She trained as a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) Chaplain Resident at the Veteran's Administration Medical Center in Lexington, focusing on palliative and hospice care.

Following her CPE year, she worked three years as a Family Support Liaison with Kentucky Organ Donor Affiliates (KODA) guiding families in the hospital setting in making the decision to give the gift of life, and supporting them in the organ donation process. She considers her work at KODA to be among the most challenging and rewarding work she has experienced. As both education and spiritual care are among her Rabbinic passions, Rabbi Cohen served as the Director of Adult and Youth Education at the Jewish Federation of the Bluegrass as well as a Pool Chaplain at St. Joseph Hospital and St. Joseph East in Lexington.

Just as Covid began, she and her family relocated to San Antonio, Texas, where she served as the Senior Rabbi at Congregation Agudas Achim. She helped the synagogue navigate through the twists and turns of the Covid pandemic, initiated a new Havura program, and created meaningful worship services and adult education classes.

In the summer of 2022, Rabbi Cohen became the Rabbi here at Congregation Beth Israel. She is thrilled to return to her small Southern Jewish community roots and to bring her 25 years of experience, ideas, and enthusiasm to her new congregational family. Pastoral care, adult education, life cycle ceremonies and worship services are among her many priorities as we honor Beth Israel's long history, celebrate in the present, and build for the future.

Rabbi Cohen is an avid history buff and loves to teach always with a mind for how the past informs the present. She enjoys cooking and can make a pretty decent challa! She is also a big sports fan (Go Lady Vols!) and looks forward to learning more about and rooting for our local Greenville and state sports teams. Rabbi Cohen also enjoys getting outside and is excited about exploring all the parks and natural spaces the Upstate has to offer. Above all, her proudest accomplishments are as a wife to her husband, Jeffrey, and a mom to her young sons, Jonah and Joshua.