



Full Bio

Rabbi Sara (Brennglass) Brandes, was born in Los Angeles, CA the eldest child of Julie and Gary Brennglass. Sara attended A.J. Heschel Day School and the Buckley School, and was a competitive gymnast as a child.

In 2000, Sara graduated Phi Beta Kappa, Magna Cum Laude from Emory University in Atlanta, GA, where she studied world religion and psychology. Her honors thesis, entitled “Uses of Ruach and Neshama in the Books of Genesis and Job” written under the direction of Rabbi Dr. David R. Blumenthal ignited Sara’s interest in critical Biblical scholarship and in spiritual exploration.

Sara completed two years of yeshiva study at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies, including one as a member of the Pardes Educators Program, and was ordained as a rabbi by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in 2008. At JTS, Sara served as the director of Isha el Achota, the JTS Women’s Center, and received awards for excellence in Bible, Jewish Philosophy, Rabbinics and Jewish law. Sara was awarded the prestigious Neubauer Fellowship and was honored with both the Rabbi Harold Gordon Prize recognizing her as the outstanding student in the first year class, and the Cyrus Adler Prize, recognizing her as the outstanding student entering her graduating class.

In 2006, Sara was certified as a yoga instructor at the Yoga Vidha Gurukul Ashram in Nashik, India, and completed one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) in 2007, having served as a hospital chaplain intern at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York, NY.

After receiving rabbinic ordination, Sara served as Middle School Rabbi at Milken Community High school in Los Angeles, CA, where she was award-

ed the N'shama Award for her contributions to that community. In 2011, Sara transitioned, joining the team at Moving Traditions, serving there as West Coast Regional Director and California Director until 2011. Although it never opened its doors, Sara served as founding director of the Neshama Center and Mikvah, working to bring a bold new vision for embodied spirituality to Los Angeles. Sara was co-founder of Minyan Kol Chai, an innovative spiritual community that blended yoga, soulful Jewish music and study, and served as Associate Rabbi at the Malibu Jewish Center until her departure from Los Angeles in 2014.

Sara made aliyah to Israel in 2014 with her husband Hyim Brandes and their two children, joining the progressive spiritual community in the Lower Galili at Kibbutz Hannaton, where she is a writer, mother and rabbi. She author of Magical World: Stories, Reflections, Poems. In the summers, she continues to return to her home away from home at Camp Alonim of the American Jewish University, where she has served as Rabbi-in-Residence since 2010.