

SA'AR KHAI SHAKED

Rabbi | Educator | Community Builder | Interfaith Leader | Writer & Consultant

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Professional Profile

Rabbi, educator, organisational leader and interfaith practitioner with more than three decades of experience in community building, education, civil society, spiritual leadership and public engagement across South Africa and Israel/Palestine. Ordained in Jerusalem in 2004, with senior experience leading congregations, educational institutions, peacebuilding initiatives, youth programmes and mission-driven organisations. Work combines Jewish learning and ritual, programme and institutional leadership, pastoral care, interreligious dialogue, writing, facilitation, cultural production and public advocacy.

Current Practice & Appointments

RabbiSaar.com – Rabbi Sa’ar Khai Shaked — *South Africa / International*

Independent Rabbinic Practice | 2023–Present

- Provides rabbinic services, life-cycle ceremonies, pastoral and spiritual accompaniment, teaching and consultation.
- Designs and facilitates courses, seminars, retreats, community processes and interfaith encounters.
- Works with individuals, families, congregations, NGOs, schools and cultural institutions.
- Writes, speaks and performs on Judaism, spirituality, community, peacebuilding and the meeting of traditions.

Midreshet Africa – Academy of Judaism — *South Africa*

Dean | 2025–Present

- Provides academic, spiritual and institutional leadership for an African-rooted academy of Judaism.
- Shapes curriculum, public learning, cultural programmes, publications and long-term institutional development.
- Builds partnerships across Jewish, interfaith, educational and civil-society networks.

The Abrahamic Movement South Africa — *South Africa*

Director | 2026–Present

- Leads the development of a national platform for Abrahamic encounter, cooperation and public action.
- Develops interfaith relationships, educational initiatives, public programmes and collaborative projects.

Professional Experience

Ha Phororo Youth Retreat Centre — *Hartbeespoort, South Africa*

Deputy Director & Community Coordinator | February 2024–June 2026

- Shared responsibility for the day-to-day leadership and strategic development of an ecumenical youth retreat centre.
- Coordinated programmes, staff, seasonal facilitators, volunteers, visiting groups and partner organisations.
- Led community development, stakeholder relations and programme design in youth leadership
- Supported governance, fundraising, donor engagement, proposals, reporting, partnerships and institutional planning.
- Developed relationships with fellow NGOs, religious bodies, educators, youth leaders and funders.

Beit Emanuel Progressive Synagogue — *Johannesburg, South Africa*

Congregational Rabbi | 2013–2023

- Provided spiritual, educational and organisational leadership to a multigenerational urban congregation of several hundred members.
- Led worship, preaching, pastoral care and life-cycle ceremonies in accordance with South African Progressive Jewish practice.
- Directed family, youth, adult-learning, cultural and social-action programmes and major community events.

- Worked with boards, committees, staff and volunteers on governance, budgets, fundraising and institutional sustainability.
- Built partnerships with schools, NGOs, civic organisations and national interreligious forums.

Achvat Yisrael Congregation — *Rishon LeZion, Israel*

Congregational Rabbi | 2008–2013

- Led a developing urban Progressive congregation through worship, education, pastoral care and community building.
- Officiated life-cycle ceremonies, taught adults and children, collaborated with schools and municipal partners, raised funds and produced cultural events.

Sulha Peace Project — *Israel / Palestine*

Executive Director | 2007–2008

- Managed an interfaith reconciliation NGO working across Israeli and Palestinian communities.
- Led organisational strategy, programmes, staff and volunteers; managed budgets, fundraising, donor liaison
- Produced large-scale gatherings and facilitated youth, adult and family encounters in a conflict-affected environment.
- Liaised with local and international partners, foundations, diplomats, facilitators and civil-society organizations.

Leo Baeck Education Center — *Haifa, Israel*

Director of Jewish Studies, Head of International Student Programme & Interim Rabbi | 2004–2007

- Directed Progressive Jewish studies and international student programming in collaboration with the University of Haifa International School.
- Designed and taught academic, spiritual, social and cultural programmes for high-school and university students.
- Led worship and pastoral support, supervised educators and facilitators, and contributed to school governance and curriculum development.
- Managed residential and experiential learning, programme logistics, budgets, evaluation and student welfare.

Beit Daniel Center for Progressive Judaism — *Tel Aviv, Israel*

Young Adult Forum Coordinator & Assistant Rabbi | 1998–2004

- Developed young-adult programming, learning, worship, social-action projects and community events.
- Taught classes, led services and supported pastoral and life-cycle work.

Community Youth Education — *Beit She'an Valley and Hefer Valley, Israel*

Regional Youth Educator | 1996–1998

- Designed and led youth leadership programmes, camps, educational journeys and community events.
- Worked with schools, local councils, parents and youth movements.

Education & Formation

Tel Aviv University, Department of Philosophy — Ph.D. studies, 2009–2013 (not completed). Research focus: Martin Buber's concepts of revelation and redemption.

Bar-Ilan University — M.A. in Hermeneutics and Cultural Studies, 2002–2005. Thesis on anthropological readings of Second Temple and Mishnaic sources.

Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion, Jerusalem — Rabbinic Ordination, 2000–2004. Rabbinic thesis: “Ararat,” a framework for holistic interfaith education.

Tel Aviv University — B.A. in History and Classical Studies, 1997–2000.

African Traditional Healing and Spiritual Formation — Initiated and trained Sangoma in the Ubongoma tradition, South Africa.

Public, Civic & Interfaith Leadership

- Chair, South African Association of Progressive Rabbis (SAAPR), 2018–2020; Vice Chair, 2014–2018; Member, 2013–2023.
- Board member, SACRED – Centre for Religious Diversity and Equality; 2013–2016.
- Member, Defend Our Democracy Campaign, South Africa, 2020–2024.
- Member, Israeli Council of Progressive Rabbis (MA'RAM), 2003–2013.
- Co-Chair, Education Committee, Israeli-Palestinian NGO Forum, 2009–2011.
- Member, Inter-Religious Coordinating Council in Israel (ICCI), 2009–2013.
- Member, Rabbis for Human Rights / Shomrey Mishpat, 2009–2013.
- Presenter, “All for Peace Radio 107.2 FM,” Israeli-Palestinian radio, 2008–2011.
- Chair of the Party Conference, Israeli Green Movement, 2012.
- Public advocacy and organising on peace, social justice, religious equality, democracy and interfaith cooperation.

Selected Publications, Film & Cultural Work

- Peace on God's Land (Hebrew), Resling Press, Tel Aviv, 2012 — author.
- The Gate Was Sealed, Hebrew/Arabic documentary film, 60 minutes, 2015 — creator.
- The Green Pastures Book: Jewish Prayers of Prosperity — collected and edited by Rabbi Sa'ar Khai Shaked.
- Mazal U'Bracha: Jewish Secrets of Wealth, with Michael Brian Lee — co-author; pre-publication manuscript.
- Writer, teacher, musician and performer; public appearances also include work as Gogo Khai, integrating music, storytelling, spirituality and public conversation.
- Curriculum, liturgy, sermons, essays, public programmes and educational resources in Judaism, interfaith relations, peacebuilding, community and spiritual practice.

Areas of Practice & Competence

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| • Rabbinic leadership, Jewish ritual and life-cycle ceremonies | • Pastoral care, chaplaincy, spiritual accompaniment and deep listening |
| • Community building, congregational development and volunteer leadership | • Interfaith dialogue, reconciliation and work across conflict and difference |
| • Executive, organisational and programme leadership | • Governance support, strategic planning and institutional development |
| • Fundraising, donor relations, proposal writing and narrative reporting | • Curriculum design, formal and experiential education, retreats and youth leadership |
| • Facilitation, public speaking, preaching, media and stakeholder engagement | • Writing, editing, cultural production, music and performance |
| • Partnership development across religious, civic, educational and public institutions | • Digital communication, WordPress, Google Workspace, Microsoft Office, Brevo and AI-assisted workflows |

Languages

Hebrew (Native) | English (Fluent) | Arabic (Basic) |
Academic: Latin; Aramaic

Additional Information

Based in South Africa; eligible to live and work in South Africa. Valid driver's licence. Parent of four children. References available on request.