



Birgit Elke Klein

Born in Krefeld, Germany, and motivated by the Torah portion "*Lekh lekha*," "Go ahead of yourself," Birgit has been a life-long seeker of the many facets of Judaism. Her explorations began with graduate Jewish Studies at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem in the mid-1980s. There she fell in love with rabbinic literature. That phase of explorations culminated with her being named Chair of the Department of Jewish History at the Hochschule für Jüdische Studien (University of Judaism) in Heidelberg, Germany, in 2006.

Philadelphia's Society Hill Synagogue gave Birgit a warm welcome when she arrived in the area in 2011 for her Weiner Family Fellowship at the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. That warm welcome led Birgit into "practical Judaism," inspiring her to pursue rabbinical studies with RRC's diverse, vibrant, and innovative community. As a passionate singer, she is very grateful to have received the Evelyn R. Mehlman Jewish Music Award in 2016.

Birgit thanks her fellow RRC students for their friendly acceptance; her instructors and mentors, especially Rabbi Avi Winokur, '91, who inspired her journey into Judaism and the rabbinate; her students and colleagues in Heidelberg, especially Dr. Susanne Bennewitz, for their support; the members of her "internship" congregations in the United States, particularly Society Hill Synagogue, and in Germany, who fostered her first practical steps; her "landlady" Deane Bartlett in Wyncote, Pa., who made her feel warmly at home; and last, but not least, all her dear friends and extended family in Germany, Belgium, Israel, and the United States who facilitated and enhanced her life in so many ways.

רבי נהוראי אומר: הוי גולה למקום תורה ואל תאמר שהיא תבוא אחרך יקיימוה
בידך ואל בינתך אל תשען

R. Nehorai says: Migrate to a place of Torah; and do not say that she [the Torah] will follow you, for your colleagues establish her in your hand; and "do not rest upon your understanding."

(*M. Avot* 4:14)

As a rabbi, Birgit will continue her journey with others to make the world more compassionate.