

## A Year of Reconstructionism Session One-April 18, 2021

### Video One-Repairing the World through a Reconstructionist Lens

*What do you think about Mordecai Kaplan using the term “salvation” instead of “tikkun olam” for social justice work? How does this change the way we might think of justice and activism in the Jewish context?*

*Ruth Messinger says that social justice work should not be part of “side ventures of Jewish life” but a core value and part of Jewish life? What happens on a practical level (programs, education etc.) that makes this value difficult to implement?*

*What lessons do you think we can take during these Pandemic times from Ruth Messinger’s message “We can’t return to the convenience of being overwhelmed?”*

### Video Two-Values Based Decision Making

*What is “Reconstructionist” about Values Based Decision Making (VBDM)?*

*What role does community empowerment play in this process, and what might be some of the challenges of putting too much power in the hands of the people?*

*In what other institutions and groups would VBDM work, and where might a more leader-heavy process work better?*

*What do you think of the Reconstructionist idea of the rabbi as the “guide on the side not the sage on the stage?”*

## Values Based Decision Making

*Values-Based Decision-Making provides a way of thinking through and expressing our commitments, allowing us to create ground between halakha (Jewish law) and modern society.*

1. Determine the issue.
2. Examine our intellectual, emotional, and moral preconceptions to understand how our experiences would impact this decision that we are making in community.
3. Examine our communal and Jewish values in relation to the issue, including community norms.
4. Examine Jewish law and teachings about the issue, including how the teachings/laws were derived and upon what values they were based. Consider the historical and contemporary context, including the history and rationales of Jewish practice.
5. Examine relevant scientific and social scientific data pertaining to the issue.
6. Assemble, compare, and weigh the conclusions from the examination of self (attitudes and beliefs), context (communal norms and values), Judaism (tradition and history), and data (#2, #3, #4, and #5).
7. Consider possible decision options and their potential outcomes, excluding options that contradict essential values and/or norms.
8. Seek consensus in the group.
9. Make the decision.

## Reconstructionist Values

- Klal Yisrael: Commitment to Community
- Mitzvah: Connection to God
- Democrazia: Democracy
- Eilu ve-eilu: Diversity
- Kedushah: Holiness
- Kevod HaBriyot: Human Dignity
- Yoshra: Integrity of Jewish Ritual Practice
- Hemshech: Jewish Continuity and the Survival of the Jewish People
- Hinuch: Jewish Education
- Keiruv: Maintaining an Inviting and Accepting Atmosphere
- Masoret: Preservation of Jewish Tradition
- Shalom Bayit: Preserving Peace in the Home
- Welcoming the Stranger (*Hahnasat Orhim*).

*From: "Boundaries and Opportunities", Reconstructionism Today, Spring, 1998, Vol. 5, Number 3, by Carol Towarnicky; Also highlighted in 2012, Congregation Dorshei Emet Minhag Committee report on participation of non-Jewish partners in synagogue life*