

February 9th, 2018/24th Sh'vat, 5778

Dear chevreh,

Many of you who are members came to KHN because it is the local synagogue, or you felt welcomed here when you walked in, or perhaps it felt like a good community in which to raise your kids. A few of you had experience with Reconstructionist synagogues in the past, or specifically felt connected with the movement/community. Recently there have been changes in the movement, at least nominally. *Reconstructing Judaism* is the new name of the central organization of the Reconstructionist movement, replacing the former: Reconstructionist Rabbinical College & Jewish Reconstructionist Communities. The movement itself is still called “Reconstructionist.” *Reconstructing Judaism* was the memoir title of the late Rabbi Eisenstein: the first president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College who built on the ideas of his father-in-law, Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, and launched Reconstructionist Judaism as a movement.

Rabbi Deborah Waxman, Ph.D., president of Reconstructing Judaism, said that “our new name is expressive of what we do and what we always aspire to do. More than ever, Judaism must be about doing, and our name is about doing...Many of us grew up in a time when Judaism was simply a matter of being; we were Jewish because of the neighborhood we grew up in, the food we ate, the culture we absorbed. Not anymore. Our new name represents an active commitment to doing. ‘Reconstructing’ is the best expression of our approach to Judaism. The phrase attached to the new name — *Deeply rooted. Boldly relevant* — expresses a reverence for Jewish tradition and its constant quest to cultivate Jewish experiences that are meaningful. The phrase shows that we live at the intersection of past and future. It tells the world that we are about taking chances, staking a claim on Judaism’s continued relevance for the future.”

This year will mark the 50th anniversary of the Reconstructionist seminary’s founding. Many of us will gather with fellow Reconstructionists from across the continent for the first Reconstructionist Convention in eight years from Nov. 15-18 in Philadelphia. The new Reconstructionist summer camp, Havaya Arts, opens on the West Coast as campers to return for another joyous summer at Camp Havaya (formerly Camp JRF) on the East Coast. All the while, the nearly 100 affiliated Reconstructionist communities like ours—and more than 400 rabbis—will continue building a meaningful Jewish future and more perfect world.

In the meantime, you might ask, “What exactly is Reconstructionism?” I think it’s important to dip into the foundational tenets of Reconstructionism, especially if you’ve never encountered them. There is no need to define yourself per se, although our synagogue is affiliated with the movement and we use siddurim and machzorim from the movement. Mordechai Kaplan, the founder of Reconstructionist ideas, never intended his ideas to form a separate movement. Personally, I have been positively influenced by a Conservative Shul and the Renewal movement as much as by the Reconstructionist seminary I attended. Yet there are important ideas to be explored, some of which we implement regularly at KHN.

We will be learning about Reconstructionism, and *Reconstructing Judaism* over a couple of sessions. I invite you to email me at rabbidianamiller@gmail.com if you are interested. We can

find a time to meet which works best for the majority of the people interested. I look forward to learning with you!

***SAVE THE DATE: Wednesday evening, February 28th open. Start picking out a costume and preparing a hamantaschen recipe, as we will share a Purim evening together!

Shabbat shalom,

Rabbi Diana