

# From the Rabbi's Desk

April 2019

Chaverim,

While you are reading this article I will be away at the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) Convention in Cincinnati, Ohio. Returning to Cincinnati will be special for several reasons. First is that I will have some time to spend with my son Michael. I also look forward to visiting with my respected teachers and mentors on the campus of Hebrew Union College Cincinnati which is important in the history of Reform Judaism in America. This year would have been the 200th birthday of Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise and the 130th birthday of the CCAR. It is important to return to Cincinnati for these milestones. This convention is not just about a return to a place, but also a refocusing on what Reform Judaism in America has valued from the beginning: the prophetic call of our Jewish tradition.

Many streams of Judaism can invoke the words of Deuteronomy 16:20 – *Tzedek, Tzedek, Tirdof*; Justice, Justice, You shall pursue! However, only the Reform Movement has devoted so much of itself to this effort. Some say religion should not mix with politics. However, politics is how we get things done in a democratic society. Our faith is much more than a personal reaching out to God. The Divine Voice, speaking through Torah and the Prophets, demands our action. Feeling is not enough.

Many congregations, including ours, have answered the call for social justice. Our call can be felt in many organizations across New London County. On the national level, in 1959, the Reform movement formed the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, known as The RAC. The RAC has continuously been at the forefront of social justice issues. The 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act were drafted in the RAC building conference room on Massachusetts Avenue in Washington, DC.

Today the RAC advocates on many issues from the perspective of Reform Jewish values. From climate change to campaign finance reform, our tradition has something to say and the RAC is helping say it in Washington. In addition, one of the most formidable advocacy groups in Israel is the Israel Religious Action Center - the IRAC.

Several weeks ago, Polly and I traveled with five of our confirmation class students to the L'Taken Social Justice Seminar in Washington, DC. Trevor Fornara's article in The Jewish Leader spoke about many aspects of the trip. However, I think there was something else very important about the seminar. They saw our Reform movement putting our Jewish values into action on the national level.

As some have been known to say, Reform is a verb. Reform is not something that happened in the past, it is something happening now. As our world changes rapidly in front of our eyes, many ethical and moral challenges are presented to us. Reform Judaism continues to meet the challenges of modernity both inside our synagogues and out in the street. At the CCAR conference, I will be recharging my own prophetic voice. Our Jewish young people also have voices and they need to know how to use them effectively. It is my intention to take as many high school students as I can gather each year to the RAC L'Taken seminars. I hope you will join with me in supporting future trips to DC.

L'Shalom,  
Rabbi Marc