

DEBORAH WAXMAN

b. February 20, 1967

NATIONAL RABBINICAL LEADER

“Creating a world that goes beyond inclusion ... is work for us all.”

She is the first woman to lead a Jewish seminary and a national congregational union.

Rabbi Deborah Waxman is the first woman and the first lesbian to lead a Jewish seminary and national congregational union. She serves as president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC) and of Reconstructing Judaism, the leading organization of the Reconstructionist movement.

Waxman was born to conservative Jewish parents in West Hartford, Connecticut. Her father was a traveling salesman and her mother was the president of their synagogue's sisterhood.

Waxman earned her bachelor's degree in religion from Columbia University, her Master of Hebrew Letters from the RRC, and her doctorate in American Jewish history from Temple University. She also completed a certificate in Jewish women's studies from the RRC in conjunction with Temple University.

In 1999 the RRC ordained Waxman. She began teaching at the seminary and served as the rabbi of Congregation Bet Haverim in New York, before becoming vice president for governance of the RRC. In that role, she merged the RRC and the Jewish Reconstructionist Communities. Together, they form the Jewish Reconstructionist movement. In 2014 she became its president.

Waxman won grants from prominent donors, such as the Kresge, the Wexner, and the Cummings Foundations. She led initiatives to create interactive digital content, to bolster Reconstructionist Judaism's ties to Israel and to help young people through camping programs.

Waxman is regarded as the Reconstructionist movement's thought leader. She has provided an important voice for feminism in Judaism, encouraging gender equality in Jewish leadership. A member of the Academic Council of the American Jewish Historical Society, she researches, writes and speaks at conferences about Jewish identity, women in American Judaism and Reconstructionist Judaism. Publications such as *The Times of Israel*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, *HuffPost*, *Forward*, and other media and academic outlets have published her articles. She also created and hosts the podcast "Hashivenu: Jewish Teachings on Resilience."

In 2015 Waxman was named to the "Forward 50," a list of Jewish Americans "who have made a significant impact on the Jewish story." She was interviewed by MSNBC following the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting in October 2018, and she wrote an opinion piece on Jewish values amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Waxman lives in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, with her partner, Christina Ager, a professor at Arcadia University.

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