

A few weeks ago Rabbi Levenberg used a story about three boys and three boxes to talk about the difference between equal and fair. The boys, who varied in height, tall, medium and short, wanted to watch a game by peering over a fence. The tallest boy was all set, but the other two boys were too short to see the game.

When giving out the 3 boxes, one could give each boy a box. That would be equal but the end result would be that only two of the boys would be able to see the game. If, however, you gave the shortest boy, two boxes and the medium height boy one box, then even though the tallest boy didn't get a box, everyone would be able to see the game. Creating parity, real fairness, may not come from giving everyone the same thing.

The celebration of Rosh Hodesh as a women's holiday and its association with the moon, raises the issue of equality and sameness. As Jennifer explained, the moon has been associated with women in Jewish tradition. Further, according to the midrash the moon and the sun were originally the same size. The moon complained, can there be two masters? As a result the moon was diminished but with its changing cycle given the power to set the Jewish calendar.

In the 1970's when the Jewish women's movement awoke from its dormancy since its activity in the 1920's, the push was for equality. Women wanted to have the same rights along with the same responsibilities. That was the period when women fought to be ordained in the Reform movement and for the right to serve as witnesses in the Conservative movement. It was when some women were looking for a physical sign of the covenant for baby girls to match circumcision for the boys. Overtime the focus moved more to highlighting the roles that women had played in earlier periods of Jewish history and the uniqueness of what women could offer. We rediscovered many of the women in the Bible and Talmud who had been overlooked. Lilith became a hero and the name of the Jewish Feminist magazine in the United States while B'ruriah and Imma Shalom and other female figures were rediscovered. The celebration of Rosh Hodesh was part of that effort to celebrate women's culture rather than to imitate male culture.

Now more than 40 years later, women clergy have changed the rabbinate and cantorate. The synagogue is different for everyone both male and female.

Temples are less hierarchical and participation is more robust. God is understood as being within and among , less often as a distant and powerful overlord. For me it is important that we remain sensitive to issues of inequality but also that we

celebrate and appreciate women's historical contributions whether in art, or cooking, or in the support of families and the most vulnerable.

Jennifer, it is very special that we have celebrated your Bat Mitzvah on Rosh Hodesh. I hope it will be a reminder that equal doesn't always have to mean the same and that we can appreciate the unique gifts of every person.