

## WOMEN'S LEAGUE SHABBAT

January 22, 2011

**Theme: *Kehillah Kedoshah***

**Parashat: Yitro**

**Committee** should consist of the following members:

- chairs/co-chairs
- publicity (Jewish newspapers, synagogue bulletin, listserv, blast email system)
- flyers, Shabbat morning handout
- coordination of service
- food/kitchen crew
- centerpieces

The committee needs to determine how involved sisterhood members will be in the service. Some sisterhoods choose to do everything and others, less. You will find in these guidelines, a copy of involvement for the entire service. You may pick and choose what your sisterhood will do. Also, you may choose to call upon your post-bat mitzvah girls to read Torah. This is a way of involving our youth.

### SUGGESTED TIME LINE

- When committee meets prior to the service:
  1. Discuss the participatory range of your sisterhood in the service
  2. Discuss the range of food involvement of your sisterhood for the kiddush and if you will be making your own centerpieces.
  3. Discuss publicity/flyers/Shabbat morning handout
- Reading parts should be assigned several weeks in advance. Confirmation emails/postcards should be sent immediately to participants.
- Flyer sent to congregation one month in advance.
- Shabbat handouts should be printed 1-2 weeks prior to the service. **Make sure that it has been proofread by several people.**
- Remind participants 1-2 weeks prior to the service.

### GENERAL INFORMATION and SUGGESTIONS

- Shabbat morning hand-outs should include publicity about Women's League.
- Flyers and centerpieces: the artwork could be taken from the Women's League Calendar Diary.
- Devar Torah: one is included in this packet *or* someone in your sisterhood may choose to write one. The subject is specific to the Torah portion, so if you are celebrating Women's League Shabbat on another day, you will have to solicit an appropriate devar Torah among your members.



## SHABBAT MORNING SERVICE

(The following is a list of all of the parts in the Shabbat morning service, including greeters. Your sisterhood can choose how much or how little they want to participate.)

- Greeters
- *Pesukei Dezimra*
- *Shacharit*
- Torah Service
- *Petichah* (Ark Opening)
- Torah Processional
- *D'var Torah*
- Torah Readers
- *Gabbaiot*
- *Bat Kohen* (if applicable)
- *Bat Levi* (if applicable)
- *Shelishit*
- *Revi'it*
- *Chamishit*
- *Shishit*
- *Shevi'it*
- Prayer for Healing
- *Maftrah*
- *Hagbahah/Gelilah*
- *Haftarah*
- *Yekum Purkan*
- Prayer for our congregation
- Prayer for our country
- Prayer for the State of Israel
- Prayer for peace
- *Ashrei*
- Torah Recessional
- *Petichah* (Ark Closing)
- *Musaf* Service
- Sisterhood Message
- *Ein Keloheinu*
- *Aleinu*
- Mourner's *Kaddish*
- *Adon Olam*
- *Kiddush*
- *Ha'Motzi*

### Other suggestions:

- Ask your rabbi lead the Mourner's Kaddish
- Ask a man to do *bagbahah* (lifting the Torah after the reading) if there are no women who can do it.
- Invite women who are knowledgeable to introduce the Torah and Haftarah readings.

REMINDER CARD/OR EMAIL



(Name of Sisterhood)

Affiliated with Women's League for Conservative Judaism

Dear (participant's name):

Thank you for agreeing to participate in Women's League Shabbat on Saturday morning, (put in date). The following is the honor that you will have during services. Please be sure to be on time and wear a head covering if you will be going onto the *bimah* for your honor.

Honor: \_\_\_\_\_

Page: \_\_\_\_\_

I look forward to seeing you at Women's League Shabbat.

*B'shalom,*  
(Chair's name)

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**Greetings from Rita Wertlieb**  
*President of Women's League for Conservative Judaism*

Good morning.

What an exciting year for Women's League – our community of Conservative Jewish women. With the warmth and enthusiasm of the Women's League biennial convention still enveloping me, I look forward to the continued success for our beloved organization, almost one hundred years old!

We have always prided ourselves on our educational programming, a cornerstone of our mission. This year's Women's League Shabbat material is devoted to the theme *kehillah kedoshah* – sacred community – that was the focus of our convention and the 2010-2011 Torah Fund campaign. Whether it is Moses' creation of a communal structure at Sinai, or women leading others in prayer in the synagogues of Eastern Europe, the power of community is transcendent. And women, assuredly, have played a principle role in sustaining Jewish community throughout the ages.

I am eager to begin my administration as the 20<sup>th</sup> president of Women's League, strengthening ties and creating anew. I hope to hear from you – both the good and the “needs work.”

May your own communities grow from strength to strength! Shabbat shalom!



## WOMEN'S LEAGUE SHABBAT Devar Torah for Parashat Yitro

*Kehillah kedoshah* – sacred community -- is the focus of so many Women's League initiatives this year. It is the theme of this year's Torah Fund campaign, and was the theme of our biennial convention that we celebrated in Baltimore just last month. How appropriate that community is also a focus of this week's parashah, *Yitro!*

In this portion Moses receives counsel from an unexpected source, his father-in-law, Yitro. After seeing Moses sitting for long hours, judging claims among his kinsmen, he says to Moses:

*“What is this thing that you are doing to the people? Why do you act alone, while all the people stand about you from morning until evening?”* (Exodus 18:14)

Rashi observes that Moses sat like a king while everyone else was standing around. Yitro was troubled that Moses, acting as sole legal authority, was “disrespectful of Israel's honor.”

Thus, Yitro's concern was not primarily Moses' solo involvement in all day-to-day activities and decision-making. Rather, he was particularly troubled by its consequences: that in assuming all responsibility himself, Moses would not encourage the development of leadership among his people. Yitro understood that one person is not a community. Only by promoting shared responsibility can Moses create a viable and dynamic community.

But Yitro's sound advice to Moses does not end here. He provides guidelines that are critical for the building of community, then and now, by instructing Moses:

“You shall choose from among all of the people: (Exodus 18:21)

- *anshei chayil* – people of valor
- *yir'ei Elohim* – God fearers
- *anshei emet* – people of truth
- *ve'sonei betza* – haters of ill-gotten gains

Each of these character attributes is necessary for leadership, not only in Moses' day but in our day as well. Leadership is not a hereditary claim, but rather should be based upon merit and capabilities. Communities are not created by one super human individual who possesses all of the necessary criteria for leadership, but rather is an association of individuals with different, but complementary strengths and talents. This model of community, forged in the desert, has sustained Jews for thousands of years.

Our Women's League community, too, is comprised of women with a wide variety of talents and interests. We are a community of stitchers and bakers, activists and philanthropists, Torah readers and dedicated adult learners. In our diversity and ability to work towards a common goal we are able to perpetuate this model of community, and like our ancestors at Sinai, we are a new generation of worthy recipients of the gifts of Torah.

## ADDITIONAL READINGS

### *Parashat Yitro*

This is an unusual reading for Women's League Shabbat. It is excerpts from a *techinab*, a Yiddish prayer by and for women. Women created their own prayer communities where they prayed in Yiddish with female prayer leaders called *firzgoerins*. *This techinab, A Song of the Ten Commandments* -- a Yiddish paraphrase of the Ten Commandments -- is attributed to a woman named Sheyndele. We have included only excerpts because this *techinab* is quite lengthy; the selected verses refer to each of the commandments.

You can break this up into 3 (or more – or less!) readings, but include the introduction.

#### **Speaker 1: INTRODUCTION**

In Eastern Europe, within their own world on the other side of the *mehitzah*, women created their own prayer communities. Both privately and publicly they recited *techinot* -- *techinot* -- Yiddish prayers for women. These prayers reflected women's experiences -- their concerns, their joys and fears, and their piety. Often *techinot* reflected on subjects of Jewish ritual and on stories and characters from the Bible.

An important part of these women's prayer communities were the *firzgoerins* -- female prayer leaders who led women in prayer.

This *techinab*, reputed to have been written by a woman named Sheyndele, is a Yiddish reflection on the Ten Commandments, the primary focus of today's parashah. It was published in Prague in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century.

#### **Speaker 2: Excerpted from Sheyndele's *A Song of the Ten Commandments***

Now let us imagine that we are sitting in the women's section of the synagogue during the reading of *parashat Yitro*. We are being led in the recitation of this *techinab* by our own *firzgoerins*.

I will begin by praising God  
Who created us all.  
I will begin with the Ten Commandments  
Which God, Blessed by He,  
Gave to us by the hand of Moses.

All of us stood at Mount Sinai,  
Each individual young and old, big and small  
Was terrified by His wonder  
As the *Shekine* showed himself on the mountain.

..... How quickly our beloved Lord God began  
The first word of the Ten Commandments  
*Anoki*, it is I,

I am your only God  
Who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

...Yes, you shall hear more.  
You shall swear no false oaths,  
The Holy Name then commanded,  
And do not make graven images,  
Or you will forever wander around the world.

Do not take My Name, the Name of God, in vain,  
For it is certain that if you do,  
It will be as if you have renounced God  
Who created heaven and earth.

Another thing I wish to say to you:  
Observe the beloved Shabbos  
And honor its great holiness  
So you are certain to live forever.

...God issued His commandments solemnly.  
Honor your father and mother diligently,  
And your days will be lengthened  
And you will live forever with God in heaven.  
And the Holy Name desires that you also respect and honor  
Your elder brother and stepmother.

**Speaker 3: continued excerpts from Sheyndele's *A Song of the Ten Commandments***

You must spill no blood  
Or the Holy Name will punish you  
And you will be known as a murderer  
Entirely shamed among men.

You must not commit adultery,  
A strange man with a strange woman  
For God considers this sin so great  
That the souls of those who commit this sin  
Will become evil spirits.

If you steal money or belongings from another,  
God will pay you in the other world,  
While in this world you will be dishonored,  
For word travels to every land.

You must never speak false witness,  
For it is as if, God forbid, you had hit your friend,  
And taken away all his money and luck,  
And you must never stand in your neighbor's blood.

It is in the beloved and holy Torah,  
Which God has written himself,  
That you shall not desire your neighbor's house or his wife.  
Or anything else that belongs to him.

...Rich God in Heaven and on the earth,  
You are the God we love.  
You brought us out of the land of Egypt,  
And gave us Your beloved Torah.

“Hear, O Israel”, began the Eternal God,  
“The Lord our God, the Lord is One”.  
All Israel answered  
Moses immediately responded:  
“Blessed is the name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever”.

...God solemnly bestowed His Commandments  
Because He created the world for the Torah.  
Our beloved Lord God has helped us many times,  
So take God's wonder to heart  
And speak of it night and day.

The wonder of our Lord God  
Will grow ever stronger,  
And at the moment when we become worthy,  
God, Blessed be He, will let us enter the Holy Land  
In our days.  
So let us say

Amen.

From *Seyder Tkbines: The Forgotten Book of Common Prayer for Jewish Women* by Devra Kay, JPS, 2004.



## WHAT IS WOMEN'S LEAGUE FOR CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM

The mission of Women's League for Conservative Judaism is to strengthen and unite synagogue women's groups, their members and individual members; support them in mutual efforts to understand and perpetuate Conservative/Masorti Judaism in the home, synagogue and community; and reinforce their bonds with Israel and Jews worldwide.

Women's League has grown significantly, both in size and status, from the group first organized by Mathilde Schechter in 1918 when 100 women, many the wives of prominent rabbis and scholars affiliated with the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, looked to perpetuate traditional Judaism in the home, synagogues and communities, a task they saw for American Jewish women. The early leaders disseminated their message through educational materials, written in English, designed to guide young women through the process of acculturation and Americanization.

After World War I, an impressive collection of publications was prepared for the growing membership for use in study circles and at home. Over the following decades, new departments and programs were initiated to meet the needs of the women of the burgeoning Conservative movement.

In the 1970s, Women's League became a member of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, World Jewish Congress, World Council of Synagogues, World Zionist Congress, and 27 other agencies devoted to Jewish communal service. In the following decade, its voice grew consistently stronger in Israel where it has forged indispensable relationships with the congregations, as well as with the women of the Masorti movement.

As women have found equality both on the pulpit and in the workplace, the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has seen the establishment of the Leadership Institute, International Days of Study, Orpah's Book List, as well as increased efforts to serve sisterhoods and individual members.

Answering the challenge of relevance for today's Conservative Jewish woman, developing an educated Jewish laity, and appealing to younger women are all part of the challenges being met by Women's League today. Through volunteer programs and projects, members expand their knowledge of, and commitment to, a vibrant and vital Judaism. Participation in contemporary causes, community service and social action is encouraged and supported.

Through its Torah Fund campaign, Women's League provides support for the students of the Jewish Theological Seminary (New York), Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies (Los Angeles), Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies (Jerusalem), and Seminario Rabinico Latinoamericano (Buenos Aires).

Women's League is as dedicated today as it was in 1918 to the creation of a vibrant American Jewish community that nurtures the individual, family and community with the values of Jewish tradition. We are extremely proud that **(name of sisterhood)** is affiliated with this phenomenal organization, Women's League for Conservative Judaism!