



## TORAH FUND: ITS BEGINNINGS

Since its inception in 1918, Women's League has been closely linked to the Jewish Theological Seminary and particularly concerned about the welfare of its students. One of the earliest projects was the first kosher canteen at Columbia University for Jewish students in military training.

In 1934, at the League's 16<sup>th</sup> annual convention, the following resolution was adopted:

*"The Women's League of the United Synagogue being in full accord with the ideals and principles set forth by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, realizing our great responsibility to that fountain of Jewish Learning and feeling that it is our paramount duty to give it our wholehearted cooperation.*

***Be it therefore resolved*** in assembly here that we pledge continued cooperation with the Seminary and consider it one of the fundamental duties of the constituent members of Women's League to assist financially to the best of our ability."

Since it wasn't until 1974, when the Equal Credit Opportunity Act passed, that women in the U.S. were granted the right to open a bank account on their own, the financial management of the funds raised became the responsibility of the Seminary.

Through the continued grassroots efforts of dedicated, resilient women, Torah Fund has continued as the philanthropic heart and soul of Women's League for Conservative Judaism. Torah Fund provides the opportunity to support Jewish educators of tomorrow and perpetuate Conservative/Masorti Judaism. This timeline highlights some of the significant events and specific beneficiaries of Torah Fund donations over decades.

## TORAH FUND TIMELINE

**1934** National Women's League of the United Synagogue of America establishes an education fund to assist the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), with each member asked to contribute at least \$6.11 annually, the Hebrew numerical equivalent of the word *Torah*.

**1942** A scholarship fund is established for the students of JTS. Dora Spiegel, then president of Women's League, believed the scholarship fund was not only financially beneficial but would also strengthen congregations through sisterhood affiliation. The campaign continued as a source of scholarship funding for seminary students. Its first-year goal was to raise \$10,000 through solicitations of \$6.11; by the 1950s, more than half the sisterhoods in Women's League were conducting their own campaigns, raising \$142,000.

**1945** Chai Club is formed. Members are encouraged to increase their annual contributions to \$18.

**1957** The first Benefactor pin is produced. A gift of \$100 is acknowledged by a solid gold charm. Each year, a new pin is created for donations above the Benefactor level.

**1958** The *Ha'yay Olam* campaign launches, with a commitment to a residence hall for students at JTS. The annual goal is raised from \$500,000 to \$1 million.

**1963** Campaign Evolution is established, to expand support of all the schools of JTS and other seminary facilities and programs.

Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem (est. 1984) Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies, Los Angeles (est. 1996) Seminario Rabinico Latinoamericano, Buenos Aires (est. 1963) Zacharias Frankel College, Potsdam (est. 2017)

The two campaigns (scholarship & building ) are combined under the name Torah Fund. Mathilde Schechter Residence Hall for undergraduate students is completed in 1976. Goldsmith Hall is dedicated in 1978 and its Mo'adon (lounge) in 1983, both for married and graduate students.

**1982** Women's League undertakes the responsibility of providing 500 bookshelves in addition to study carrels for the new Seminary library. Over the next four years, the project raises about \$1,400,000.

**1984** The Sculpture Garden at Schechter Institutes is dedicated. Conservative/Masorti rabbinical and cantorial students study at Schechter during their year in Israel, along with more than 500 Israelis who obtain graduate degrees in Judaic Studies.

**1989** The dedication of the Residence Halls at University of Judaism (American Jewish University) takes place, with a total of \$487,500 raised for this important undertaking.

**1989** The Quadrangle Beautification project is launched, enabling the creation of a tranquil environment as a gathering space for students and faculty. Over \$600,000 is raised, with the dedication taking place in October 1990.

**1992** The Financial Aid Fund of \$1 million to augment the Seminary's student aid program is established and completed with the dedication of the Unterberg Lobby Wall of Plaques. The student aid is awarded on the basis of demonstrated need.

**1993** The Women's League Seminary Synagogue Project is undertaken in commemoration of its fiftieth year. Women's League renovates the former JTS library reading room, transforming it into a permanent synagogue. Dedication takes place in October 1995, having raised \$1,258,000. This sacred space enhances the spiritual life of the men and women who worship together, and the chapel also serves as a gathering place for important events.

**1996-1997** The Mathilde Schechter Residence Hall renovation takes place. The conclusion to this four-year campaign is celebrated in October 2000. After twenty years of regular use, in addition to general enhancements, the residence hall also benefits from an upgrade of its electronic infrastructure.

**2001-2005** The Women's League Educational Pavilion project at JTS is undertaken and completed, having raised more than \$1,400,000. On the fourth floor of Kripke Tower, the pavilion features a state-of-the-art, high-tech lecture hall and educational and meeting facilities. Configured for distance learning, the pavilion provides access to students across the world. It is complemented by a series of original art works by Israeli artist Avner Moriah, with the theme Women in Jewish History.

**2005** The Scholarship Project is launched, a four-year campaign to raise \$2 million for scholarships for students at JTS, the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies, Schechter Institutes and Seminario Rabinico Latinoamericano.

**2015** *She Plants a Seed for the Future* gets underway, a campaign to support Ziegler students during their year in Israel and to refurbish and re-sanctify the Women's League Seminary Synagogue at JTS.

**2017** Zacharias Frankel College, a rabbinic school to train a new generation of Masorti/Conservative rabbis to address the spiritual needs of the expanding European Jewish population, is established in Potsdam, Germany. Women's League is proud to support this fifth school as part of its mission to provide higher education and training for the Jewish leaders of tomorrow.

**2019** The *Creating New Spaces* campaign is launched. A special project, its goal is to raise \$200,000 to create spiritual and physical spaces that nourish body and soul. These funds will help support the Women's League Study Space at JTS and the Women's League Institute on Gender Bias and Harassment at Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies.

**2019** *Torah Fund Legacy Society* membership is created for our most dedicated visionaries who value education and the future of the Jewish people, as a way to show their lasting commitment through a legacy gift.

**2019** *Chadashot*, an online newsletter, begins publication to educate and inform Torah Fund donors.

**2020** Online donations to Torah Fund, opportunities encouraged and expanded for donors.

**2020** *Torah Fund ecards* introduced adding online greetings to the popular paper Torah Fund greeting cards.

**2021** Canadian donors are now able to make online Torah Fund donations and send online greetings.

**2021** *Torah Fund Stands with Israel*, an educational forum on the current dynamics in the Middle East and the role of our Jewish State, is launched. This virtual series features speakers from the Israeli government and Divrei Torah from Conservative/Masorti rabbis.

**2023** To show support for Israel and the hostages after the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel, Torah Fund's chosen theme for 2024-2025 was changed to *Am Yisrael Chai*, "All People of Israel Live".

**2025** Torah Fund *Golden Supporter* giving level created (\$8,100).

**Total raised by the Torah Fund campaign** since its beginning in 1934:  
**\$111,076,461** (as of 6/30/2024)