



MERCAZ-Canada, MERCAZ USA, &



Women's League for Conservative Judaism Biennial Essay Contest

AWARDS: FIVE SCHOLARSHIPS IN THE AMOUNTS OF: \$1,000, \$600, \$400 and \$250 (2X)

ELIGIBILITY: Applicants must be 14-19 years of age. Applicants must be members of a Conservative congregation. The scholarship will apply to any Conservative Movement sponsored Israel program (including Israel programs taking place from June 1, 2014 and on).

THEME OF THIS YEAR'S ESSAY COMPETITION:

“WOMEN IN ZIONISM: PAST AND PRESENT”

This year's contest celebrates the upcoming 30th anniversary of the ordination of women as Conservative Rabbis.

ESSAY FORMAT:

Choose one of the questions below, making sure you answer all parts of the question:

- 1) Jewish women have been involved in Zionism, and later the State of Israel, from its early years both in Eretz Yisrael and in the Diaspora. Choose two women actively involved in Zionism or the Zionist movement: one from the pre-State years or the first three decades of the State of Israel (1935-1978, either from Eretz Yisrael or the Diaspora) and one involved today (2004-2014, again from either location).
 - a. Give a short history of your chosen figures, explaining why you chose those two women.
 - b. Compare and contrast the challenges faced by both women in their advancement towards leadership in the Zionist Movement and/or Israeli politics; what pathways were open to them, their experiences and successes.

- 2) Women in Israel have been guaranteed equality since the dawn of the State. The Israeli Declaration of Independence states, “*The State of Israel... will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex.*” Even so, as in North America, the path for women has not always been easy.
 - a. Compare and contrast the opportunities for women's advancement in Israel versus the Diaspora in North America.
 - b. Choose 2 women from the same general time period, one from Israel and one from the Diaspora who helped, or is currently helping, advance women's rights in her country. Give a short history of each woman. Explain each woman's accomplishments in her country and why you chose them.

- 3) The issue of women's religious rights in Israel has been prominently featured in the news over the past year.
 - a. Are there issues in the Israeli legal/political reality that makes the advancement of women to positions of Jewish religious leadership difficult? What are the main issues and/or difficulties surrounding the religious status of women in Judaism as observed in Israel? What do you believe the lasting effects of this discussion will be on the religious status of women in Israel, and/or specifically on the status of the non-Orthodox movements in Israel?
 - b. Contrast these issues in Israel with women's advancement in Jewish religious leadership in Canada and the United States.

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SCHEDULE:

1. **Opening of Essay Contest:** October 1, 2013: Entry forms and additional information can be found at www.mercaz.ca, www.mercazusa.org, or www.wlcj.org or see page 3.
2. **Deadline for Entries:** Entries must be postmarked by March 7, 2014. Judging will begin 10 days later. Late entries will not be accepted. MERCAZ and WLCJ cannot be responsible for delayed or misdirected mail.
3. **Announcement of Winners:** Winners will be announced publicly during the Women's League convention, July 2014. (Those applying for Israel programs taking place during summer 2014 will be notified privately by May 12th.)

FORMAT: Up to 900 words – typed and double-spaced, accompanied by a passport-size photo.

MAIL ESSAYS TO:

MERCAZ USA/CANADA/Women's League Essay Contest
136 East 39th Street, 4th floor, New York, NY 10016-0914 **OR** 61 Alness Street, #203, Toronto, Ontario M3J 2H2.

Since we cannot be responsible for delayed or misdirected mail, it is recommended that the essays be sent electronically with a read receipt to:

- info@mercazusa.org for the United States
- mercaz-masorti@intrr.net for Canada).

EACH ENTRY MUST INCLUDE:

- Entry form (on page 3), which must serve as title page.
- Entry forms are also available from:
 - The MERCAZ USA website- www.mercazusa.org (tel: 212-533-2061)
 - The MERCAZ-CANADA website- www.mercaz.ca (tel: 416-667-1717)
 - The Women's League website- www.wlcj.org (tel: 212-870-1260)

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ENTRY FORM

Name:

Address (including city, state/province, zip/postal code):

Date of Birth:

Telephone:

Email Address:

Congregation (including address with city, state/province and zip/postal code):

Current School:

Current Grade:

Israel Program(s) Applying For* (Scholarships made be saved for use on future programs.):

* All Conservative Movement trips are eligible for scholarship use. Writing a specific trip here does not obligate you to use the scholarship only for that trip.