

D'var Torah II: What Is Anniversary Shabbat?

What *is* Anniversary Shabbat? Oh yes, there are a variety of answers – the most common is that Anniversary Shabbat celebrates the birthday of our founder, Mathilde Schechter. In fact, Mathilde's birthday is December 16.

Rather, Anniversary Shabbat commemorates the day on which Mathilde Schechter appeared before a meeting of the United Synagogue – founded by her late husband, Solomon Schechter in 1913, shortly before his death – with a remarkable proposal. She voiced the need for a women's arm of the movement, and suggested as the name: the National Women's League of the United Synagogue. Mathilde outlined her vision of this organization that would coordinate the growing number of sisterhoods in Conservative synagogues. Their mission was to perpetuate traditional Judaism in America, in the home, the synagogue, and community.

So here we are today, celebrating our Anniversary Shabbat, **91** years later, a living testimony to our beloved founder's vision for the role of Jewish women in the modern world.

Each of us, as members of the _____(name)_____sisterhood, makes up the hundred thousand-strong membership of Women's League for Conservative Judaism.

We are also links in the chain that goes back through our mothers and grandmothers to Mathilde Schechter and those pioneering spirits who forged bonds of a shared love of Torah, concern for our homes and congregations, and a nurturing and supportive community of sisters.

How proud Mathilde Schechter would be if she could see us today. Our theme this year, *Heart and Soul*, also the theme of the Torah Fund campaign and our biennial convention this past November, is so appropriate to this anniversary. We could not have lasted for 90 years without the commitment of our membership: their **hearts** –that is their physical beings, and their **souls** – their spiritual needs and expressions – to maintain and sustain this remarkable league of women.

Happy anniversary!