

# Toward Sisterhood Success

A special newsletter for affiliated groups of Women's League for Conservative Judaism  
Fall 2014

## From the President Carol S. Simon



How exciting to be embarking on another year of sisterhood events, programs, fundraisers and study days, and, of course, Torah Fund.

This is the time of the year that we focus on growing our membership, widening our circles. I encourage you to keep that focus all year long! Everyday should be a membership event, everyday is an opportunity to widen our circles, and everyone in your sisterhood is part of that team.

You will find many of Women's League's new and redesigned initiatives on our website ([www.wlcj.org](http://www.wlcj.org)). Try this year's Divrei Hokhmah discussion starters entitled, "Words Can Hurt, Words Can Heal." I would love for each of you to open a board meeting, or for that matter any meeting, with one, several times during the year. Then, let me know what your members thought. Mishpachah II is already under way, and on the website. This year's non-fiction Orpah's selection, *Chapters of the Heart*, is a moving selection of real life situations, to which we can all relate, that can lead to programs and/or social action initiatives.

As a sisterhood president you are a member of your region board. I can hear you saying, "another meeting, really?" But I want to assure that your region board and president are there to support, listen, mentor and network with you and all of your membership.

I encourage you to share the information you receive from your region, from

*Continued on next page*



## Mishpachah II *Lessons from Our Sisters*

Mishpachah II offers programming on pressing concerns within families, using literature and film as triggers for discussion. Each unit is named after an archetypal woman: Sarah, Ruth, Mathilde, and Golda – all selected for their unique contributions, whether real or literary. Each unit will focus on specific challenges to contemporary family life – and families in all of their configurations – that we began to explore in Mishpachah I.

New units will be posted at [www.wlcj.org](http://www.wlcj.org) every two months. Each will incorporate some aspect of the four goals: celebrating, caring, healing, learning, and will include many of the following:

- Essays from the 2014 Orpah non-fiction selection, *Chapters of the Heart*
- Recommendations from Wo-Flix, the Women's League film forum
- Short story selection from BookMarks (Mothers) or other short story anthologies
- Additional works of fiction and non-fiction relating to the theme
- Conversation Pieces
- Jewish text study
- Jewish values appropriate to the theme
- Newly created Jewish ritual or celebration
- Social action or chesed project

**Over the course of the year**, your sisterhood should offer a variety of programs. Not every program will appeal to every member, but there should be something in the course of the year to attract as many women (new and old members) as possible. In addition to the Mishpachah material, you should choose interactive programs, some type of study, social action projects, Israel advocacy/education, and a fundraiser or two if your synagogue expects financial support. Some of these can be one-time offerings, while others can be ongoing (special interest groups, for instance).

We recommend using Mishpachah as a unifying theme for the year. Here are some suggestions to use it in a variety of programmatic settings. Let us know if you have any more ideas for how to utilize this material.

- **Sisterhood Goes to the Movies:** Sunday morning with bagels and coffee and watch one of the films recommended in Wo-flix. Discussion questions are provided
- **Special Interest Group - Short Story Reading Circle:** Read the stories featured in BookMarks with the discussion questions
- **Hevruta Sisters:** Use the study and learning material for those interested in ongoing text study. New material will be posted every two months
- **Our Families Ourselves:** An intergenerational evening using essays from *Chapters of the Heart* (Orpah's List, nonfiction 2014) as a starting point.
- **Anti-Bullying Program** for USY and middle school families, using *Once Broken ...* from *Words that Hurt/Words that Heal*
- **Between the Generations:** Invite USYers to visit local senior centers with your members to discuss changing family roles, residents' personal histories, create scrapbooks, etc

# Board Meeting

Sunday, December 14, 2014  
Jewish Theological Seminary  
**Women & Leadership**  
Guest Speaker: Rabbi Rachel Ain

## TRAINING SERVICES MENU

*Your sisterhood's per capita entitles you to these customized services designed to meet its individual needs.*

### On-Site Seminars

A Women's League trainer will visit your sisterhood and facilitate a workshop on a variety of topics to meet the challenges of your specific sisterhood:

Communication & Social Media	Dealing with Sisterhood Challenges
Goal Setting/Strategic Planning	Sisterhood & Synagogue Community
Leadership Development	Sisterhood 101
Membership	Z'havah
Team Building	

We also can customize a seminar to meet your specific needs. You can register for a seminar on-line at [www.wlcj.org](http://www.wlcj.org)

**Conference Calls:** A specialized trainer or Women's League director will work with your sisterhood president, leaders or committees on a variety of topics or concerns.

**Mentoring:** A personal mentor will work one on one with a sisterhood president.

**PrezNet:** A moderated listserv where sisterhood presidents share ideas and helpful information. Email [womensleague@wlcj.org](mailto:womensleague@wlcj.org) to join.

**Leadership Institutes:** Held twice a year, these three-day intense training experiences can prepare you for the challenges of leadership. The **next Leadership Institute** will be held January 18-20, 2015 in Richardson, Texas. To register go to [www.wlcj.org](http://www.wlcj.org).

**Z'havah Institute:** Enhances personal growth in a one-day workshop designed to fit into the busy lives of Z'havah women. For information about the next institute, check [www.wlcj.org](http://www.wlcj.org).

**Distance Workshops:** Using the technology of conference calls and webinars, advice, tips & tricks, and first-hand experience come directly into your home. You will be able to apply your new knowledge in your sisterhood immediately.

## YOUR SISTERHOOD SUCCESS TEAM

**Region Sisterhood Support Vice President:** Communicates frequently to share information. Helps a sisterhood face challenges before they become real problems.

**Region President:** Your go-to person for support, information, networking.

**Area Director:** Each sisterhood is assigned someone from the support team to help find resources, brainstorm with, and support, its leadership.

**Region/International Chairs & Directors:** Experienced women available to share ideas and help you work through challenges.

*From the President, continued*

the Shabbat email to announcements of events and region gatherings, with the other women in your sisterhood and in your congregation who are not yet sisterhood members. You're our point person, and that can be so easy in today's electronic world: just forward the emails to your members. You never know when something might catch someone's eye and get them involved.

At Convention 2014, I spoke about connecting to the women in your synagogue. The challenge that I proposed was to identify one or two women in your synagogue who are not active.

Invite them for coffee, a drink or ice cream. Connect! Find out what they like to do, what their talents are, ask them about their family...become friends. Friends like doing things with friends. Invite them to a sisterhood event with you. Just don't ask them to be on the board! Let me know if you've accepted this challenge and how it's worked for you.

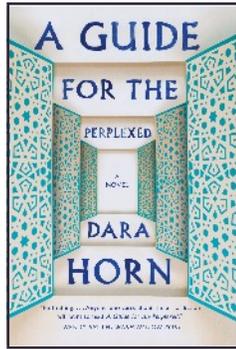
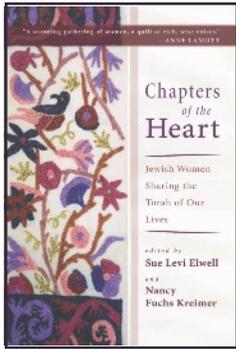
I love this time of year...besides the haggim, it offers an open slate when anything is possible. Enjoy being your sisterhood president and be proud to represent the women of your synagogue. I don't think there is nothing better!

### President Carol Simon is coming to a region near you:

- Central Great Lakes:  
October 19-23
- Yorktown Jewish Center (Metro-North):  
Women's League Shabbat,  
December 5, 6
- Or Ami (Houston, Texas)  
January 16-17
- Traveling around IntraContinental:  
January 20-23
- Beth Torah Adath Yeshurun  
(North Miami Beach, Florida):  
Women's League Shabbat,  
January 2, 3

For more information, or to join with Carol, contact your region president or Carol directly ([csimon@wlcj.org](mailto:csimon@wlcj.org))

## Orpah's List Selections



Study guides are available on the website, [www.wlcj.org](http://www.wlcj.org), under Services to Members

### MERCAZ USA: Elections for 2015 Zionist Congress

2014 has been challenging for Israel and the Jewish people. The events during and surrounding Operation Protective Edge this past summer raised the specter of conflict and vulnerability.

This winter, we will each have an exciting opportunity to take a small, simple action that will have a measurable impact on Israel's future and bring the highest values of Conservative/Masorti Judaism, such as pluralism, egalitarianism, caring, and openness, to bear in the Jewish homeland. The election for the World Zionist Congress will take place from mid-January through Pesach. This is the only global Jewish election in which those in the United States can participate, giving us a say about the Jewish future in the State of Israel and around the world.

By voting for the Mercaz USA slate, we secure the future of our movement in Israel and throughout the world. It takes only a few minutes and costs only a few dollars to register, but the impact on the lives of our brothers and sisters who benefit from the programs of our movement will last a lifetime. Our kehillot, our youth movements, our camps, and countless other programs depend on the allocations that come from these votes.

In the months ahead please stay on the lookout for information about voting for Mercaz USA. Please be sure to share the information with the members of your sisterhood and your congregation. Our sisters and brothers in Israel and around the world are relying on us for our participation. We can change the Jewish world with our votes.

# DISTANCE WORKSHOPS

## 2014-2015 schedule



Women's League offers members needs-driven in-service conference call training experiences that will help your sisterhood now. While you enhance your personal skills, your sisterhood will benefit from practical, proven advice from our talented veteran volunteers and able professional staff.

**October 23, 2014**

Mishpachah:  
Chapters of a Woman's Heart

**November 20, 2014**

The Three R's of Membership:  
Recruit, Reclaim and Retain

**December 15, 2015**

Social Media:  
Promoting Sisterhood the New Way

**January 22, 2015**

Nominating Committee: Creating  
Realistic Board Structures

**February 9, 2015**

Torah Fund: Teapots, Mathilde and  
Testimonials

**March 18, 2015**

Spirituality and Personal Wellness

**April 20, 2015**

Fundraising: The Ways to the Means

**May 18, 2015**

Israel Today

**June 18, 2015**

Budgeting Your Team

There is no charge but pre-registration is necessary.

To register, go to [www.wlcj.org](http://www.wlcj.org). You will be notified *by email* of the call-in number and access code one week before.

For questions, email Coordinator Sandy Berenbaum, [davsandy@aol.com](mailto:davsandy@aol.com)

### PER CAPITA REMINDER

The annual per capita fee for sisterhood members was raised as for 2013. After careful consideration, we are sure that the new structure, together with our streamlined budget and the visionary strategic plan, will allow Women's League to continue to provide the outstanding educational materials, sisterhood tools and training services that have been the hallmark of its 95-year history.

We are aware of the difficulties facing sisterhoods, but we remind you that per capita has not been raised since 2003!

The next phases of the increase are:

For 2014-2015: \$13 per member

For 2015-2016 and forward: \$15 per member.

If your sisterhood would like to discuss the new per capita, please contact Meryl Balaban, [mbalaban@wlcj.org](mailto:mbalaban@wlcj.org).

# WOMEN'S LEAGUE & MASORTI ISRAEL

*Part of Women's League's mission is to reinforce the bonds between our members, Conservative/Masorti Judaism and Israel. We currently have four projects to help us achieve this goal.*

## REGIONS AND SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP KEHILLOT

Each of Women's League's 13 regions has developed an ongoing relationship with Masorti congregations in Israel. You can find a list of the congregations your region works with in the back of the Calendar Diary or by contacting your region leadership. We urge regions and sisterhoods to be in regular contact with the women in their partner congregations.

## BAT MITZVAH PROJECT

A boy preparing for his bar mitzvah asked his mother for the name of her Torah portion. She couldn't tell him, not because she didn't know, but because she had never had a bat mitzvah with its associated parashah. For most Israeli families, a girl reaching the age of bat mitzvah is a reason for having a party. While she might have had a wonderful time with her friends and family, she would not have learned a single prayer or ritual or Torah portion.

From this simple question grew a vital new pilot program supported by Women's League and the Masorti Movement. Designed around a series of workshops, mothers and daughters prepare for this religious milestone together. For many, it will be their first exposure to accessing Jewish text and participating in synagogue ritual. Jewish tradition has long lauded a mother's ability to create a Jewish environment. Thanks to Women's League and the Masorti Movement, many more women will be able to inspire their children – both boys and girls – as full and equal participants in Jewish life.

*We ask each sisterhood to donate \$100 toward this project and the Days of Study described below. Contributions from individuals will also be gratefully accepted.*

## WOMEN'S DAYS OF STUDY



Women's League, in conjunction with the Schechter Institute in Jerusalem, sponsors four Days of Study for women across Israel with classes taught in Hebrew, Russian, English, and Spanish. These programs have grown in popularity each year. In 2013, over 800 Israeli women studied under our auspices

In the winter there are three study days, hosted by congregations in the north, south and central parts of Israel. The classes are taught by Conservative/Masorti

rabbis and educators. In June, Machon Schechter hosts a study day for everyone. In 2013, over 300 women attended sessions taught by 18 lecturers on a wide variety of topics. Videos of 2 of the wonderful classes (in English) can be found at [www.wlcj.org](http://www.wlcj.org). Watch and enjoy them for a taste of this wonderful program.

If you are planning to be in Israel in February or June and would like to participate in the next Day of Study, check our website. Dates will be posted as we have them.

## BAR/BAT MITZVAH FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Masorti's Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program is Israeli's only nationwide effort to offer children with special needs an opportunity to celebrate becoming bar/bat mitzvah. The program provides enrichment for youth with autism, mental retardation, hearing impairments, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, and other needs. Working with 40 schools and institutions, up to 300 children each year prepare for their aliyah latorah. Since the program's inception, more than 3,000 have celebrated this milestone in a way most never thought possible.

Women's League donates all tzedakah funds collected at tefillot at Women's League functions to this project. All tzedakah collected at tefillot during Women's League functions is donated to this project.

## Social Action and Public Policy Resource Guide

*Add your voice to the public debate on the major issues of our time*

Women's League represents you in major Jewish and communal organizations. For a list of organizations with whom Women's League is affiliated that provide resources you can access for information and program ideas for your sisterhood follow these directions

1. Login at [www.wlcj.org](http://www.wlcj.org)
2. On the next screen, click on Download WLCJ Member Materials.
3. Scroll to **#8 SOCIAL ACTION AND PUBLIC POLICY/Social Action and Public Policy Resource Guide.**

The guide is divided by topic: Israel Advocacy, World Affairs and Environment. We encourage you to check them out!

## 2014 Resolutions

Resolutions represent the official position of Women's League on a broad array of topics. This year, for the first time, in order to enable all members of Women's League to have the opportunity to vote on the proposed resolutions, the process in taking place online.

A committee met last winter and invited members to submit topics for consideration. Six were chosen and resolutions were drafted. They were posted and made available for review and members were invited to participate in conference calls to discuss them.

We are now ready to vote. A survey form will be available online by Thursday, October 29. We will notify all members who have given Women's League their email address. In addition, region presidents will include the link in their weekly messages. A link will be placed on the Women's League website homepage.

Voting will be open from October 29 – November 17. The resolutions can be viewed on the Women's League website by following the instructions above, but click on **#13 RESOLUTIONS 2014** to view and download resolutions

We look forward to your participation in the process.