

# WOMEN'S LEAGUE SHABBAT 2016



## *Dvar Torah 1* **OUR BIBLICAL MODELS**

When we look for models of women who have left enduring and important legacies – who have the power to invest our lives with meaning even today – we need look no further than to some of the remarkable women of the Bible. In reading about the *eishet chayil* from the book of Proverbs – or about Esther, Ruth and Miriam and the host of unnamed women who helped create the tabernacle in the desert – we recognize that these women still inspire within us a passion to make the world a better place.

This year our Women's League theme "Nat'ah Karem – She plants a vineyard" is derived from that *eishet chayil* poem. This theme, represented on the 2015-2016 Torah Fund pin, is our affirmation that the industrious woman is well deserving of praise. When we wear our Torah Fund pins and engage in the many creative activities of sisterhood, we demonstrate our commitment to those values, knowing that planting a vineyard benefits more than just ourselves. Its impact will be appreciated by future generations, as well, and through this legacy we have the ability to improve the world.

How do Women's League sisterhoods encourage us to improve the world – to impart a lasting legacy?

First, as sisterhood members, we are a community. And as a community, we all maintain its vibrancy, its relevance and its success by supporting and participating in its activities. Like the *eishet chayil* who plants, tends and harvests the grapes, we do the same to sustain and cultivate our sisterhood 'vineyard.' Learning from this model, we should be willing to take risks, to embrace new ideas and ways of doing things. The *eishet chayil's* legacy is truly one of independence and productivity

... traits to be emulated.

Ruth is another biblical woman who generates an enduring legacy. Because of her decision to follow her mother-in-law to a new home and people, she demonstrates loyalty and commitment. As she performs the back-breaking work of gathering grain from the corners of the fields, she sustains herself and Naomi. There are those in our own community who have embraced Ruth's legacy of converting to Judaism. And we each replicate Ruth's example as we extend ourselves in caring for our family, our friends and those in our community.

Likewise, Esther shows tremendous courage in defending her people in a time of grave danger. In a sense, we too inherit her legacy of loyalty to the Jewish people, standing with the state of Israel that is still surrounded by enemies seeking its destruction. In addition, many of us have emulated Esther's legacy of impacting Jewish continuity through our roles as philanthropists, fundraisers, and selfless volunteers.

And then, as women who ably multi-task, we seek opportunities for learning and self improvement. This is the continuing legacy of Women's League for Conservative Judaism. Innovative educational materials, study days, social action events, and book groups – all provide new and inspiring lessons. Just one example: the Women's League Hiddur Mitzvah Project beautifully enhances our enjoyment of the mitzvot with its descriptions of holiday observances and projects designed to make those celebrations more meaningful. There are directions for a Kos Miryam to use at our seders. Miriam and the women who followed her in the desert exemplify the creativity that we seek to inject into our lives and into our sisterhoods. As the women who danced with Miriam, spinning vibrant yarns for beautifying the desert tabernacle, our members beautify their own sanctuaries with Torah covers, ark coverings and wall hangings.

The legacy of these biblical women should be an inspiration to each of us – to imbue our own actions with dedication and a passion to make the world a better place. Through family, sisterhood, and community, may we all go from strength to strength as we emulate their commitment, creativity and productivity.

Shabbat Shalom.

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