



WOMEN'S LEAGUE FOR CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM

Women's League Shabbat 2017/5777
P'ri Yadehah - The Fruit of Her Hands

D'var Torah: Me'a

Almost 100 years ago, 100 women, many the wives of prominent rabbis and scholars affiliated with the Jewish Theological Seminary, saw a need and set a course of action. Under the leadership of Mathilde Schechter, the Women's Religious Union of the United Synagogue established a mission to "perpetuate traditional Judaism in their homes, synagogues and communities, a task for American Jewish women." This was the beginning of today's Women's League for Conservative Judaism, the network for all women who support the mission of enhancing Jewish knowledge, engaging in Jewish life, expanding communal involvement, and supporting *klal Yisrael*.

Today, we are in our countdown to Me'a – 100. One hundred years of identifying and fulfilling the needs of modern, evolving Jewish women and their communities. According to historian Shuly Rubin Schwartz, "congregational sisterhoods formed the backbone of the educational mission of the Conservative synagogue... Sisterhood women successfully took on many projects that greatly enhanced Conservative Jewish life in their synagogues, offering financial support as well as volunteer hours."

As women's roles evolved in society, so did the scope of Women's League. Today, we are dedicated to educate and activate women of all ages. Our current Women's League logo emphasizes the role that today's women play as keepers of the flames of mitzvot, family, study, Israel, Torah, and community. *Mah yafah yerushataynu* (How beautiful is our heritage) reflects Women's League's ongoing commitment to our vital and dynamic tradition. Our flame motif connects Women's League with the other organizations of our Conservative movement. Past, present, and future we see a need and set a course of action to answer the challenge of relevance for today's Conservative Jewish women.

It is only appropriate that our Torah Fund theme this countdown year comes from the *Eishet Chayil* prayer that appears in the Book of Proverbs (31:31). *P'ri Yadehah* - the fruit of her hands. As President Carol Simon has said, "*P'ri yadehah* depicts the results of the work that is done to create a better world, a world that is focused on the opportunities to make a difference."

Our vineyards are the works and good deeds we plant and nurture. As we approach Me'a, our 100th year, we stop to reflect on our actions. We celebrate the fruit of our hands, the results of the work done by so many women of valor.

Shabbat shalom.

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