



D'var Torah - Women's League Shabbat 5778

בא אל פרעה, *Bo el Paroh*, "God said to Moshe, Go to Pharaoh."

One hundred years ago, 100 women, under the leadership of Mathilde Schechter, founded the Women's Religious Union of the United Synagogue. Mathilde told her friends and colleagues to go out to the women and teach them how to be modern Jewish women in North America. Their mission was to "perpetuate traditional Judaism in their homes, synagogues and communities." And they travelled to Colorado and to Pennsylvania, to Florida and to North Carolina, to New York and to California, to Canada and to Texas. During our first 100 years, we prepared materials and activities for use in study circles and at home. We sent information out to our members through Outlook Magazine. Our Leadership Training Department "developed courses on Sisterhood work, principles of the Conservative movement, and the role of the 20th century American woman in Jewish life." We expanded our educational outreach with the Torah Scholarship Fund and when we created, with United Synagogue, United Synagogue Youth (USY). Our name continued to evolve from Women's Religious Union of the United Synagogue to Women's League of United Synagogue to Women's League for Conservative Judaism.

As we entered the 21st century, we reached out to our members with publications on our website, on-line book discussions, and Distance Learning. Our leaders traveled, going to our sisterhoods across North America. Historian Shuly Rubin Schwartz noted "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 changed in our culture, Women's League also evolved. As we embark on our 2nd hundred years, we continue to connect with Conservative Jewish women in their homes and synagogues around the globe and we strive to nurture each of our members with the values of Jewish tradition. We use technology to educate and engage our women, to talk about the impact of world events on us as Jewish women, to learn new ways to make our Sisterhoods relevant and to study with world-renowned scholars. And we continue to go to our member's communities to share text and leadership skills.

Let's go back for a moment to the beginning passage of Parashat Bo, בא אל פרעה, *bo el Paroh*, "Go to Pharaoh." In Modern Hebrew, the word "bo" means "come." For a moment, let's translate this passage, as "Come to Pharaoh." Perhaps, God is saying to Moses that he doesn't have to go alone. Maybe God is saying, "Come, we'll go together." God is with Moshe, giving him encouragement and support completing a task that causes him to reach outside his comfort zone. We don't have to go alone either. *Bo iti*, come with me as we journey together into the next 100 years of Women's League.

Shabbat Shalom

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