

MY TORAH FUND WORKSHOP INR CONFERENCE JUNE 2-3, 2019

Good afternoon everyone. I am Marilyn Cohen, Torah Fund Vice President of our INR region. I'm delighted to have this opportunity to bring you up-to-date on what's happening in our Torah Fund World.

First of all it's important to review the BASICS:

These facts should be so well ingrained in your heads that you could tell anyone you meet about them.

WHAT IS TORAH FUND? TORAH FUND is the dedicated philanthropy or Tzedakah of Women's League for Conservative Judaism. OUR donors belong to sisterhoods at Conservative synagogues in the United States and Canada or they are Individual Members of Women's League. Monies raised by the Annual Torah Fund Campaign support scholarships and student programming at the FIVE degree-granting seminaries of higher learning worldwide. **Engage audience:** Two are in North America: **What & Where are they?** the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York & the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies in Los Angeles. **One in Israel Who & Where?** The Schechter Institutes of Jewish Studies is in Jerusalem **and in Argentina ?** the Seminario Rabinico Latinoamericano in in Buenos Aires, Argentina **and the newest one in Germany?** Zacharias Frankel College is in Potsdam.

The MISSION of Torah Fund is to provide YOU & every Conservative Jewish woman the opportunity of fulfilling the Mitzvah of Tzedakah by preserving, promoting and perpetuating Conservative/Masorti Judaism through active giving to the Torah Fund Campaign of Women's League for Conservative Judaism.

Each of our seminaries are multi-faceted, amazing institutions. Let's look a little more closely at them:

For instance:

The **Jewish Theological Seminary** (also referred to by its initials as '**JTS**') includes the **Rabbinical School**, the **H.L. Miller Cantorial School**, the **William Davidson School of Education**, **Gershon Kekst Graduate School**, and the **Albert A. List College**. Its **library** houses one of the largest collection of Jewish books and rare manuscripts in the world.

JTS's **Center for Pastoral Education** is rapidly becoming a leader in its field, for clergy of all faiths. Knowing how to counsel people are priceless skills. In the past, Rabbinical students acquired 40 hours of pastoral education. Today at the new Center for Pastoral Education, Rabbinical students are required to take **400 hours** of pastoral education leading to pastoral certification.

I'm sure you are aware that the JTS is undergoing a huge redevelopment of its campus. When completed, it will include a new library, collection of Judaica treasures, a state of the art new residence hall that will better meet the

needs of JTS students, conference facilities, and an auditorium of Performing Arts. Together these facilities will enable JTS to provide 21st century education for students, and project their vision in teaching throughout North America and the world.

The **Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies** is the rabbinical school of the American Jewish University in Los Angeles.

The **Judith Miller Introduction to Judaism** program at the American Jewish University in California, is another great source of pride for Women's League and torah fund. The Miller program teaches the basics of Judaism to all who express an interest in it, the Miller program offers 18 class sessions on topics all at a reasonable price and with generous scholarships. Students and faculty support the fine work of the Miller program and the students learn a great deal by doing so.

The Schechter Institutes in Jerusalem include: a leading Israeli graduate school called the **Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies**; the **Schechter Rabbinical Seminary**; the **TALI Educational System** which prepares teachers of Jewish studies in Israeli public schools; **Neve Schechter** which houses the center for Jewish heritage in the arts at Neve Tzedek in Tel Aviv, **Midreshet Schechter**, which offers adult education through synagogues and community centers throughout Israel, and **Midreshet Yerushalayim** which offers Jewish learning to Jews in the Ukraine. I've actually seen, first hand, the important work that TALI

is doing in the Secular School System in Israel.

TALI is the Hebrew acronym for “-Tigbur Limudei Yahadut or Enriched Jewish Studies) It is a network of schools that provides a pluralistic Jewish Studies program to approximately 50,000 school children in 325 public schools and pre-schools throughout Israel—comprising more than 12% of all **secular** public schools in Israel. TALI offers the middle-way in Israel for Jewish education, tradition and the awakening of Jewish identity.

Through the curriculum material developed at Schechter, and through the Schechter training of educators and teachers, TALI makes a great contribution to Jewish knowledge and identity for thousands of Israelis who are not in the religious school system. The informal and spiritual education facilitated by TALI rabbis is based on their guiding principles which champion kinship to our heritage, land and to a pluralistic view of Jewish Peoplehood, conveying the belief that all Jews share a history and destiny.

[Now let's go to the other side of the world – to South America:](#)

The **Seminario Rabinico Latinoamericano** houses the **Abraham J. Heschel Rabbinical Training Institute**, the **Cantorial and Hebrew Music Teachers Education Beta Asaf Institute**, and programs in **Continuing Education**. Its campus library in Buenos Aires houses the largest

collection of Jewish books in Latin America. We'll hear more about this institution later.

The **Zacharias Frankel College** is the newest seminary in the Masorti world. Located in a suburb of Berlin, at the University of Potsdam, it trains Masorti/Conservative rabbis in Europe. Its first graduate – Nitza Stein Kokin -- was ordained on June 18, 2017.

All of our five seminaries are centers of excellence. Our graduates are employed throughout the world – many in congregational pulpits, *but not all*. They are also active in social justice, Jewish education, Israel advocacy, chaplaincy, university Hillels, and non-profit organizational management, and as Jewish lay leaders who are leaders in business, law, medicine and comparable professions.

When you and I give to Torah Fund we are making an investment in the Jewish future in not only our Conservative/Masorti world but the general world as well.

To understand this even better, we should look more closely at just a few of our talented students or alumni to see what we are investing in:

We donors to Torah Fund are investing in students like
1. David Yedid: As a second-year rabbinical student at JTS, David Yedid who was a Wexner Scholar and a Davidson Fellow, was deeply shaped by his work as a field guide with New Vision Wilderness, helping young

adults and teens to heal from the trauma of suicidal ideation, addiction, abuse, and mental illness.

Driven to expand direct-care opportunities for youth in distress, he is a **founding staff member and rabbinic intern** at BaMidbar Wilderness Therapy, a therapy and addiction treatment program for young Jewish adults. An avid Ramah-nik, Dave spent five summers at Camp Ramah in varied roles as a camper and staff member, and he takes this experience with him in this new therapeutic venture.

2. Torah Fund donors are also investing in **Anna Silverman**, who has just graduated from the H. L. Miller Cantorial School of JTS this May. Growing up in Warsaw, Poland, Anna did not know she was Jewish until 1990, when she was 26 years old, and studying opera at the Academy of Music in Warsaw. Anna began to explore her Jewish roots when she met her first openly-Jewish woman in 2004. Let's pause over that phrase "openly-Jewish woman": It speaks volumes about the Anti-Semitism that exists where Anna grew up. As a JTS student, Anna has visited many of our sisterhoods to enrich their Torah Fund events with her beautiful singing and her account of her remarkable life's journey.
3. Ordained by the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies, **Rabbi Neal Loevinger** works as Director of Spiritual Care/ Chaplaincy at Vassar Brothers Medical Center in Poughkeepsie, NY. He is responsible for leadership of

the chaplain team, for the Clinical Pastoral Education program, for strengthening relationships with community religious groups, and integrating spiritual care into hospital operations.

4. Rabbi Gabriel Botnick is rabbi of Mishkon-Tephilo in Venice, California. A 2014 graduate of the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies, he now serves on the school's faculty, teaching Halakhah (Jewish law), as well as teaching in the Miller Introduction to Judaism program of AJU. He is also a Mohel (performs brit milah) and is the only non-Orthodox rabbi in the world certified by the Israeli rabbinate as a Shochet.

5. Rabbi Sandra Kochman – Born in Paraguay, she received her Rabbinic Ordination from the Seminario Rabinico Latinoamericano Marshall T. Meyer in 2000. Since November 2005 she has lived in Jerusalem where she works at the Masorti Community in the Bet HaKerem Neighborhood and at the Masorti Movement as the Coordinator of weddings and conversions at the Kotel's egalitarian "Ezrat Israel" plaza.

6. DEBBIE SAVAGE:

I actually have a personal investment I'd like to tell you about. My daughter, Debra Cohen Savage, received her Masters of Jewish Education from the Davidson School at JTS. And this past week I witnessed what that education REALLY meant. Debbie has been a Jewish studies

teacher in Toronto's Jewish Day School system for ___ years. Currently, Debbie is Vice Principal of the Associated Hebrew Middle School in Toronto and in that capacity organizes and facilitates all school-wide activities throughout the year. Last week, parents and grandparents of boys in grade 7 were invited to their kids' Chagigat Keshet – a celebration of the B'nai Mitzvah in a Family Education Program. My grandson,, Koby will have his Bar Mitzvah at the end of the summer. Debbie led the whole program: I was awed at her ability to engage all those present – both students and adults. Her love of imparting the joy of yiddishkeit
Her enthusiasm
Her kindness and positive acknowledgement of every answer offered.
How she taught Torah concepts in a traditional yet modern way.
All these things and more, made me so proud of her achievements and made me think of how vital the program is at the Davidson Education school in training our teachers so that they, in turn, can influence and nurture thousands of our children in becoming proud, knowledgeable and committed to our Jewish heritage.

7. Tamara Eppelbaum, not a rabbi or a cantor, who graduated JTS' Albert A. List College in 2011, joined the Israeli army when she made aliyah. Now she serves as a spokeswoman for the Israel Defense Forces, responsible for the development and execution

of the IDF's media strategy for international audiences, including dozens of news outlets around the world. She relates, "I recently brought a group of international journalists to the Syrian border to meet Israeli medical personnel who treat Syrian men, women and children injured in the war. The Syrians came to the IDF believing we were the enemy, but gratefully received medical aid. It was one of the most impactful things I have ever seen."

We are so proud of all of our students and alumni and of the impact they are having on our communities and on our world.

The Cost of Educating Clergy in the US

We want you to understand the cost of providing a rigorous, authentic, caring, and practical education at our seminaries.

In the United States, to educate a rabbi or a cantor costs approximately \$55,000 per year for 5 or 6 years. That's \$275,000-\$330,000 to educate clergy. Tuition does not cover this cost. JTS, as one example, relies on private donations, including Torah Fund, for 70% of its annual budget, and distributes over \$6,000,000 in financial assistance annually to students in its five schools: undergraduate, graduate, education, rabbinic, and cantorial.

Each of the seminaries that Torah Fund supports – JTS, Ziegler, the Seminario, Schechter, and Frankel, dedicates a different percentage of its annual budget to student scholarships. Torah Fund donations support student scholarships and educational programming at all five seminaries in 4 different countries. We leave it to the schools to decide the portion of their budget which goes to scholarships each year, and we support their efforts.

Visiting Seminaries/Classes online & in-person/Websites

While all five seminaries that Torah Fund supports are part of the Conservative/Masorti movement, each one is unique. The best way to get to know them is to visit them. If you can't get to them in person, visit their websites and participate in their on-line offerings. These include weekly Torah commentary in English, which is sent via email to subscribers by JTS, by Ziegler, and by Schechter. JTS offers on-line classes on a regular basis. It is worth the small effort to subscribe to each school's email list, so that you are informed of news and events, including concerts, days of study, and public lectures. Or, make yourself a note to visit each website once every few months, or before major Jewish holidays, to see what great ideas each one can offer you or your community to deepen your Jewish practice and Jewish knowledge.

But today we are going to get up-close and personal with one of our seminaries. Namely the Seminario Rabinico Latinoamericano in Buenos Aires. As you know, Women's

League organized a special trip there this winter and our own Consultant, Renee Ravich, went there and is going to share with us her reflections and pictures. Renee....

[Renee Ravich's slide show](#)

THANK YOU RENEE FOR SHARING YOUR EXPERIENCE AT THE SEMINARIO WITH US. What an amazing time you all had and now we can truly understand the importance of this remarkable school to the Jews of South America.

As you know, each year Women's League and our Torah Fund Campaign adopts a special theme. The Torah Fund theme for 2018-2019 is ATID which means FUTURE.

As Women's League for Conservative Judaism enters its second century, Torah Fund is in its 77th year, and the State of Israel enters its 71st year, we look forward with joy to our future together with you, our sisterhood members and supporters of Torah Fund. It is up to US to ensure that our synagogues, schools, summer camps, universities, and communal agencies have skilled clergy to provide leadership so that we, as Conservative Jews, can stay strong and prosper. *Our* TF Campaign provides the opportunity to raise funds to ensure that our places of learning remain healthy and strong. This is the part we have chosen to play and we have done it well for **77 years** and in that time, from our grassroots donors, have raised over **100 million dollars!**

Let us strive to find even more innovative ways to engage our membership to ensure the ongoing continuity of our movement.

So now it begs the question – **HOW** DO WE GO ABOUT RAISING TORAH FUND DOLLARS TO HELP THESE STUDENTS?

The first step in EVERY fundraising Campaign is to **SET YOUR GOAL**. Each year, the Sisterhood TF Chair works with her President, and myself, to arrive at a mutually agreed upon GOAL for TF. Just like every other fundraising organization around, we ask sisterhoods to try for a little bit more, since cost of living and inflation is always rising - but of course we take into consideration any extenuating circumstances as well. So that is why I am so proud to be able to announce that **9** Sisterhoods reached or exceeded their Goals last year.

We are extremely proud of all of you for working so hard to attain these results. And I think you should be proud of yourselves!

I have **ACHIEVEMENT CERTIFICATES** for each of these Sisterhoods and as I call your name, please come up to receive it & stay standing behind me please. If no one is here from that Sisterhood, I will send theirs in the mail.

BETH DAVID B'NAI ISRAEL BETHAM	TORONTO.ONT.CN	CN
BETH IACOB SYNAGOGUE	HAMILTON.ONT.CN	CN
BETH TIKVAHS SYNAGOGUE	TORONTO.ONT.CN	CN
CONGREGATION BETH SHOLOM-CHEVRA SHAS	DE WITT.NY	NY
SHAARE ZEDEK CONGREGATION	MONTREAL.OC	OC
SHAARE ZION CONGREGATION	MONTREAL.OC	OC
TEMPLE BETHEL	ITHACA.NY	NY
TEMPLE BETHEL	ROCHESTER.NY	NY
TEMPLE BETH ZEDEK	AMHERST.NY	NY

Mazal Tov again to all our Sisterhoods who reached their Goals. CLAP!! Let's take a picture!

So I guess I don't really have to explain that the most successful way of reaching GOAL is usually done through TF EVENTS or DIRECT SOLICITATION when we encourage Sisterhood women to donate at the **BENEFACTOR level OR HIGHER**. In so doing, these donors will receive a special gift – a beautiful TF PIN (that can also be worn as a PENDANT). But of course, any and all donations to TF are very much appreciated.

It never fails to amaze me on how resourceful and creative our sisterhoods can be when planning their Torah Fund programs. Let's look at a few examples that I hope will inspire your sisterhood to try them as well. Remember, we LOVE sharing our successes with everyone.

1. Beth El in Rochester (where our Conference was last year) is chaired by Abbey Rasnick and she has sent a description of what they do. Their sisterhood raises the highest amount in our annual Torah Fund Campaign in our region:
 - a. Temple Beth El/ Rochester, NY Sisterhood held its annual Torah Fund Benefactor's lunch on Sunday, October 7th 2018. Our guest speaker was our congregation's Hazzan, Randall Levin, who began his tenure at Temple Beth El in July, 2018.
 - b. The event was held in the entertainment room of Rustic Village Apartments, and dairy lunch was prepared by several Sisterhood members who keep kosher and volunteered to cook or bake. Hazzan Levin shared many interesting insights about courses and teachers at JTS, as well as how very important the generous benefactor donations are toward enhancing life for students at JTS.
 - c. Although only 18 of our 47 benefactors were able to attend, the event proved to be very enjoyable and well received by all there. For the 2018-2019 year Temple Beth El Sisterhood Benefactors have contributed \$8633 to Torah Fund.
2. Esther Racoosin will now tell us about her sisterhood's Torah Fund event.
3. Robin Metzger – North Atlantic Region – had a different kind of program. It was held DURING Pesach called “PASSOVER TASTE & TALK” Everyone was asked to bring their family's favourite seder stories or

traditions, & to show off any unique Hagadahs. They were asked to send ahead of the program, their favourite Passover recipes and Passover Parody songs which were compiled into handouts. The program turned out to be fascinating as there were a number of women with very old or unique Hagadot & unique traditions. They also sang fun English Seder Songs that were written by 1 of their members or they found on the internet. As a matter of fact, our family has been singing songs like these at our seders for years.

Show flyers – Recipes / Seder Parody Songs/

Robin told me how well this program was received. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves and learned something new along the way.

Many Sisterhoods find that honoring a sisterhood member, a valuable volunteer within the sisterhood, the congregation, and in the community brings in many people and helps to make their Torah Fund events successful.

As an example:

4. A sisterhood selects an honoree each year which allows them to recognize someone for their volunteering efforts and/or involvement. They hold this event as a brunch at a local hotel to elevate the importance of the event. They charge \$40 for brunch and a minimum \$18 donation to Torah Fund. The honoree invites friends and family outside of their congregation so it becomes a community event.

5. If your Rabbi and/or Cantor have attended any of the seminars we support, invite them to speak at your Torah Fund event and share their personal experiences, including the advantages of the Torah Fund Campaign to their education/training. Beth Tikvah Women's newly hired Assistant Rabbi Louis Sacks spoke about how invaluable Torah Fund was to him in his year in Israel. Instead of having to worry about finding a part time job to meet his expenses, the help he received from TF enabled him to concentrate on his studies and experience Israel to the fullest.

6. One sisterhood has a "Tealess Tea" each year. They send an invitation to all families in their congregation. The invitation is extended in the form of a poem asking them to sit down at home and have a cup of tea with them (a teabag is enclosed with the invitation). They ask for a minimum of \$18 which should be remitted in an enclosed addressed envelope. The sisterhood women get together to stuff the over 900 invitations over coffee and tea. This has proven to be successful and this sisterhood achieves their goal each year.

Student speakers

7. Among the most effective speakers about Torah Fund are current students. There are certain criteria required for this particular program. Rabbi Lilly Kaufman, Torah Fund's Executive Director, facilitates and coordinates all the details of this program but you have to be aware that she needs a **3 month advance** notice for it. The

information is also available on the Torah Fund web page, which is located on the JTS website, at www.jtsa.edu/torahfund.

Since your sisterhood must cover the student's travel costs, it is best, for our region, to find a student from the JTS in New York. Bringing someone from California is quite costly.

Each sisterhood is responsible for paying a nominal fee to the student of \$100. The expectation is that a rabbinical, undergraduate or education student would speak for 15 minutes and take a few questions, for this kind of fee. If you expect someone to **teach** a class you would need to pay them more. **If you request a cantorial student, and expect them to sing a type of music which is best sung with instrumental accompaniment, you need to hire the accompanist and budget accordingly, including rehearsal time; or find a volunteer who is a skilled musician; and make sure there is a working, tuned piano, etc. Cantorial students can reasonably be expected to sing 2 or 3 songs, and speak for a few minutes about their journey to the cantorate, their school, and what they hope for their future. They should not be expected to perform a full concert. Rabbi Lilly works closely with each sisterhood chair to clarify the nature of the program and all other details.**

These students are our very best ambassadors, and they can inspire your donors as few other people can.

Would anyone else like to share a successful Torah Fund program with us?

What are other ways of raising TF dollars?

Greeting Cards – Show my collection & Beth Tzedec's flyer/poster

Tzedakah Boxes – handed out to everyone in the room.

THE TORAH FUND LEGACY SOCIETY

Now I'd like to talk to you about a new program from Women's League called the **TORAH FUND LEGACY SOCIETY**.

First- What does 'LEGACY' mean? According to the Dictionary it is something that is handed down or something that remains from a previous generation or time. Practically speaking, it can be in the form of a BEQUEST or simply money or property that is left to somebody or some institution in a Will.

When we think of Torah Fund, we think of opportunity, the opportunity to help sustain the remarkable degree-granting institutions of higher Jewish learning of the Conservative/Masorti movement worldwide.

And now that opportunity and that support expands into the future! I am so excited to share with you information on a new initiative – **The Torah Fund Legacy Society!** This is incredibly exciting! It is something every Torah Fund donor

can be a part of. And a wonderful opportunity for our donors.

The Torah Fund Legacy Society will be launching in the next few months. Who will belong? **Anyone** who includes Torah Fund in their estate planning or wills-- and informs us of their wish to do so.

This is a wonderful opportunity for individuals to impact the future of Jewish education after they are gone -- and demonstrate to their heirs their strong commitment to Jewish values.

The brochures, forms, and other materials are being finalized now, along with a very special gift each member of the Society will receive to enhance their Torah Fund pin. This gift will be in the form a small 'Dangler' or Charm that will hook onto all future Torah Fund pins.

This is an exciting adventure, a partnership we will ask you to join, as together we work today to make a difference tomorrow!

CONCLUSION:

One last point that I've learned over the years is that when it comes to fundraising, keep in mind the REASON you are asking others for money and always make sure you've donated yourself BEFORE you ask others to do the same. You will feel more confident in yourself and more sympathetic to others if you do.

I trust I've shed some light on why Torah Fund is vital in ensuring that our legacy is passed down to future generations of Conservative/Masorti Jews. If you haven't already done so, or if you have been inspired to give more, please be sure to contact your own TF Chair to make your TF DONATION **today** or see me after the session.

As you know, the **DEADLINE** for Torah Fund donations is JUNE 15th of each year but for Canadians it's June 1st. However, if I receive any TF donations today, I'll personally deliver it to the office in Toronto on Tuesday or get it to the New York office on time too.

Thank you all for your support of Torah Fund and I want to wish you an exciting and prosperous Torah Fund Campaign next year as well.

NOTE: Portions (highlighted in green) in this talk were left out due to time constraints.