

Garden State Region News - February 20, 2026



**STAND
WITH
ISRAEL**



**STAND UP
TO JEWISH
HATE**

WL Week

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MESSAGE FROM SHEILA KAUFMAN, GSR PRESIDENT

Dear Affiliate,

Shalom!

This week's parsha is Terumah, which means "offering." In a nutshell, there are 13 offerings that the people of Israel bring with meaning to make the Mishkan. G-d gives Moses instructions on how to build the Tabernacle so that he can dwell amongst the Israelites. The instructions include how to make the temple so that it can be dismantled and reassembled as they move through the desert. From the poles to the tapestries to the colors to the chambers, all were described in great detail.



What can we learn from this? Giving from the heart not only has meaning from the giver but the receiver. Bringing different materials together can be uplifted to a higher level as in the temple. Pride in building and working together is precious and has great meaning.

Imagine what we can do together rather than working alone. The support everyone gives both in creating and implementing a program is wonderful and a great learning experience. This is the charge for all of you and your sisterhoods. Work together, be open to others and imagine what you can build.

This past shabbat, I spent time with the women of Congregation Beth Ohr in Old Bridge at their Sisterhood Shabbat and Kiddush. A wonderful group of women, I was so happy to be with them. I hope to see other Affiliates, so when I call, please say, "Yes, we would love to have you at our program or meeting on such and such date." And more than likely, I will say, "I would love to!"

Please sign up for our Coffee and Conversation program scheduled for this Sunday, February 22 at 11 am EST on Zoom with our Israeli Kehillot counterparts in which we will be discussing "Joy and Judaism: Family and Community." Our speakers will be from Moreshet Avraham in Jerusalem, Torat Hayyim in Herzliya, and Orly Prince from Miriam Sisterhood of Oheb Shalom Congregation in South Orange. So please register and join us!

Just a reminder to submit your Sisterhood Affiliate's 2026 Jewels in the Crown Application by March 2. It is coming up fast. Look below under the WLCJ CONVENTION header for information.

Shabbat Shalom,

Sheila

Sheila Kaufman

President, Garden State Region WLCJ

gsrpresident24@wlcj.org

"Networking to engage, enrich and empower Conservative Jewish women"

2024-2026 EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

President - [Sheila Kaufman](#)

VP, Programming - [Susan Winter](#)

VP, Sisterhood/Affiliate Support - [Cheryl Sessler](#)

VP, Torah Fund - [Sindy Manas](#)

Secretary, Communications - [Ilene Rothman](#)

Secretary, Corresponding - [Susan Sferas](#)

Secretary, Financial - [Lisa Katz](#)

Secretary, Recording - [Carol Kotch](#)

Treasurer - [Donna Franklin](#)

Parliamentarian - [Dorothy Cohen](#)

Immediate Past President - [Lynette Seader](#)

Advisor to the Board - [Meryl Balaban](#)

Advisor to the Board - [Heddy Belman](#)

GSR REGION PROGRAMS

- **Sun. Feb. 22, 2026 @ 11 am EST / 6 pm IST** - Coffee and Conversation on Zoom - Meet with our Israeli Kehillot counterparts on "Joy in Judaism: Family & Community."
 - **Mon. Mar. 9, 2026 @ 7:30 pm EST** - Coffee and Conversation on Zoom - Rabbi Stephanie Dickstein compares Vashti to Queen Esther in "Naked Under the Crown: Evolving Views of Esther and Vashti as Role Models for Jewish Women."
 - **Sun. May 3, 2026 @ 9 am - 4 pm** - GSR Spring Conference and Installation of Officers - "Jewish Latinos - Coming to America" at Congregation B'nai Israel, Millburn
 - **Sun.-Wed. July 12-15, 2026** - WLCJ Convention 2026, Alexandria, VA
-



GSR Coffee and Conversation on Zoom

Sunday, February 22, 2026 at 11 am EST / 6 pm IST

Joy in Judaism: Family and Community

What does "Joy in Judaism" mean to Israeli families and communities and in the Garden State Region?
Discussion will be led by our Masorti Kehillot (congregations)
- Moreshet Avraham and Torat Hayyim.
There will also be a speaker from the Garden State Region.



Topics and speakers are:

Moreshet Avraham, Jerusalem

Joy in Israeli "Family Day" (Henrietta Szold) - Rabbi Amirit Rosen
The Joy of Chesed - Natalie Mendelsohn

Torat Hayyim, Herzliya

Joy and Judaism: Community - Tahlil Ilan Ber
Joy and Judaism: Family - Iris Sadeh Rosler

Garden State Region, NJ

Community: Inside and Out - Orli Prince,
Oheb Shalom Congregation, South Orange



Questions? Susan Winter at winter.susan@gmail.com

Register at <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/s1/UMnEPpK/joy>

Register



GSR Coffee and Conversation on Zoom

Monday, March 9, 2026 at 7:30 PM

**Naked Under the Crown:
Evolving Views of Esther and Vashti
as Role Models for Jewish Women**

Speaker - Rabbi Stephanie Dickstein

Once, only wild girls dressed up as Vashti. Then it was Esther who was boring and possibly problematic. Is the pendulum swinging back again? We will explore how assessments of Queens Esther and Vashti as heroines, a villain or even a significant part of the Purim Story have evolved over the centuries and especially in our own times.



Rabbi Stephanie Dickstein was the first woman with young children ordained at JTS to serve as a pulpit rabbi in New Jersey. She also worked as a chaplain, a Rabbinical School Assistant dean and continues to offer Jewish spiritual care and learning.

Questions? Susan Winter at winter.susan@gmail.com

Register at <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/sl/yFWivt0/VashtiEsther>

Register

SAVE THE DATE

2026 Garden State Region
Spring Conference & Installations
Sunday, May 3, 2026 ~ 9:00 to 4:00 pm (TBD)
Congregation B'nai Israel, Millburn, NJ

SISTERHOOD AFFILIATE PROGRAMS

Sisterhood Affiliates,

Do you have any programs that you would like others to know about? Either to publicize your event in advance or to share your affiliate program afterwards.

- To publicize your event in advance, send a flyer in jpg or pdf format with Registration link.
- To showcase your affiliate programs post event, submit up to 3 photos with captions and a few sentences to describe your program. (We will shorten if necessary.)

Please e-mail your programs that you would like posted in this newsletter to both [Ilene Rothman](#) AND [Sheila Kaufman](#).

Temple Beth El of Somerset

presents

A Women's Seder

A Celebration of the Women in Our Lives

*Sunday,
March 8, 2026*

4:30 pm

\$36 pp

*Be a part of this event with
Special Guest Chef, Naomi
Lasky and Special Guest
Leader, Sherri Morris.*

See below for details.



A dedicated Haggadah has been written for this very special event.

All women are invited, and you do not need to be a temple member or Jewish. To make this event memorable, we do ask for just a few things from you to help us prepare.

Submission for Haggadah: Think of a woman in your life you would like to celebrate by having her picture and a dedication in our personalized Haggadah.

\$5 - Please email or bring to the temple a picture of her, with a 1-2 sentence dedication written below.

\$3 - If you would like to do just a dedication **or** just a picture.

*Please provide this information ***no later than Jan. 30th***: Complete the information below, email this form and the picture you've chosen to Lisa, tbesomerset@gmail.com. You can also come by the temple during office hours and provide this form, payment and your picture will be scanned and returned to you.

Your name: _____

Your email: _____

Name of pictured person: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

**If you are doing a dedication, please provide 1-2 sentences about this person: _____

Your submissions will become part of the Haggadah, making this event even more special and memorable! Please join us!

An email invitation will be sent separately. Invite and bring your family, friends, neighbors!

TO PRINT FORM

Questions? Lisa at tbesomerset@gmail.com



Torah Fund supports programs and scholarships at the five Conservative/Masorti global institutes of higher education.



Announcing Our 2025-2026 Campaign Theme:

Oseh Shalom

עשה שלום

Maker of Peace

We strive to make a significant impact through scholarships and programs that benefit students at The Jewish Theological Seminary, Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies, Schechter Institutes, Seminario Rabinico Latinoamericano, and The Abraham J. Heschel Seminary.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we help committed Jewish students become the rabbis, cantors, educators, synagogue administrators, social workers, scholars, researchers and lay leaders of tomorrow.

When you support Torah Fund, you help educate students in New York, Los Angeles, Israel, Latin America and Europe—and you align with those who value learning, knowledge and providing the future generation with relevant skills to fortify the Jewish people.

Visit www.jtsa.edu/torah-fund

Oseh Shalom Bimromav, “may the One who makes peace in the heavens, make peace for us and all the people of Israel,” appears at the end of Kaddish and in other prayers, and is also a song. We help foster Jewish unity by our support of the five global Conservative/Masorti institutes of higher education.



PLEASE GIVE GENEROUSLY TO TORAH FUND!

TORAH FUND GIVING LEVELS

Golden Supporter: \$8,100
Keter Kavod \$5,000
Scholarship Patron \$2,500
Patron \$1,200
Associate Patron \$600
Guardian \$300
Benefactor \$180

FOR OUR U.S. SUPPORTERS, go to inspired.jtsa.edu/torahfund
Or send your check to the Torah Fund office.

FOR OUR CANADIAN SUPPORTERS, go to torahfundecards.jtsa.edu/canadian
Make a donation of any amount with the minimum purchase of one ecard.
Or send a check to The Jewish Theological Society, 100 Elder Street, North York, Ontario, M3H 5G7.

The dedicated philanthropy of the Women's League for Conservative Judaism, Torah Fund supports scholarships and programs in the worldwide Conservative/Masorti institutes of higher Jewish learning.

TORAH FUND

3080 Broadway, New York, NY 10027
(212) 678-8876
www.jtsa.edu/torah-fund • torahfund@jtsa.edu

We have beautiful new ecards!
Think of Torah Fund for any greeting.

We're expanding our collection with two new designs by Israeli artist Bracha Lavee—a thank-you card and a mazal tov card.

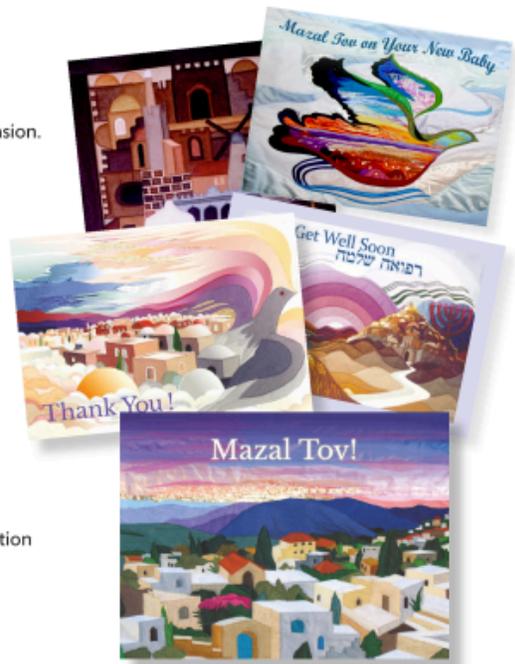
Show your care by sending a Torah Fund ecard for any occasion. For only \$5 per recipient you can send an attractive ecard—and you can even schedule it for a specific time!

Revenue from ecard purchases benefits the Torah Fund general campaign, and our affiliates receive credit for purchases. Make your selection today at torahfundecards.jtsa.edu

For our Canadian supporters, go to torahfundecards.jtsa.edu/canadian

And for our Canadian donors: Make your gift to Torah Fund online via our ecards! For a minimum C\$5 ecard purchase, you can add a contribution of any amount to Torah Fund.

It's easy! Select the card design you'd like to send and follow the user-friendly prompts to complete your transaction.



Torah Fund supports scholarships and programs at the five worldwide Conservative/Masorti institutes of higher education:

Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies in Los Angeles, Schechter Institutes in Jerusalem, Seminario Rabinico Latinoamericano in Buenos Aires, and The Abraham J. Heschel Seminary.

Thanks to our donors, we ensure quality education and diverse opportunities for students to become future Jewish leaders serving the broader Jewish community.

Our Jewish future is in your hands!
Visit torahfundecards.jtsa.edu
and send an ecard today.

[Click HERE](#) to send a Torah Fund E-Card
[Click HERE](#) to donate to this year's 2025-26 Torah Fund Campaign
[Click HERE](#) to donate to the Torah Fund Legacy Society
[Click HERE](#) for the Torah Fund Chadashot Newsletter

Any questions please e-mail Sindy Manas at smanas750e@gmail.com.

GOOD & WELFARE - GARDEN STATE REGION
Share your news and nachas with us!

Let us know if you have any simchas, well wishes, and sorrows to pass on to [Sheila Kaufman](#).

Birthday Wishes

Wishing all who have February anniversaries and birthdays, **Yom Huledet Sameach!**

Refuah Shlema

- **Chuck and Ellen Engelhart**, Sisterhood Co-President of Temple Beth El, Somerset.

- **Lynne WeissMarshall**, Past President Central NJ Branch
- **Jeanette Brownstein**, Immediate Past President Florida Region
- **Anne Schimberg**, Past President Florida Region

DONATION OPPORTUNITIES

Make a Donation to the Garden State Region to:

- Honor someone special
- Wish a Mazel Tov to a Bar/Bat Mitzvah family
- Send get well wishes
- Send condolences

Our **Scholarship Fund** helps to send women to WLCJ Convention and Leadership Institute where they learn necessary skills to share with our sisterhoods.

The **Sunshine Fund** supports members of the GSR Board in their time of need.

The **Evelyn Auerbach Education Fund** to sponsor an annual GSR Region educational event.

To make donations, contact Donna Franklin, GSR Treasurer, at gstrtreasurer@wlcj.org and include which fund(s) to make the donation to.

Or mail your check payable to "GSR-WLCJ" to
Donna Franklin, 7 Liddy Place, West Caldwell, NJ 07006
Donations can also be made via Credit Card.

Donate to GSR using Credit Card

WLCJ PROGRAMS AND MESSAGES

FIGHTING FOR THE EGALITARIAN KOTEL AT THE ISRAELI SUPREME COURT

In a unified push for religious pluralism, the Conservative/Masorti Movement took the fight for an egalitarian Western Wall to the Israeli Supreme Court this week. After a decade of government delays and broken promises regarding the 2016 Kotel Agreement, **WLCJ International President Julia Loeb** and **Executive Director Rabbi Ellen S. Wolintz-Fields** joined global movement leaders to demand equal rights, dignity, and physical access for all Jews. Read the full update from our leaders on the ongoing struggle to ensure the Kotel reflects the true unity and diversity of our people.

READ

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS: WHY WL INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP?

Dr. Susan Farber and the Power of Cherished Friends

Since 2005, Dr. Susan Farber has experienced the profound impact of WLCJ Individual Membership, sharing how virtual tools and regional connections have enriched her journey from local leadership to international social action. Read why she believes membership is a gift worth recognizing.

READ



CALLING ALL MEMBERS: PLEASE JOIN THE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING



PRESENTATION AND VOTE ON THE INCOMING SLATE

Thurs | Feb 26 | 7:30 pm | Online

Please join us for short presentation and vote on the incoming slate. To review the incoming slate, [click here](#). You will receive the Zoom link after completing your registration. All WLCJ Members are invited!

REGISTER

SHABBAT MESSAGE

Unmasking Adar: Finding the Divine in the Everyday

Yom Kippur strips away the physical to find the spiritual, but Purim challenges us to find holiness right in the middle of the feast. In her latest reflection, Linda Klempner explores the deep meaning behind our masks, the hidden miracles of the Megillah, and reminds us that our greatest achievement is revealing the presence of the Divine in our everyday lives.

READ



WLCJ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO BE HONORED AT JTS CONVOCATION

 **ONLINE**

Monday, February 23, 10:30 AM–12:00 PM ET



Please join us as **WLCJ Executive Director Rabbi Ellen S. Wolintz-Fields** receives an honorary doctorate from JTS.

[Register for the Livestream](#)

WL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

 **ONLINE**

**Sunday, February 22, 2026
at 7:30 pm ET**



Join us for an engaging conversation with **Nina Manolson, M.A., NBC-HWC**, Body-Peace Coach, as we explore the complicated relationship Jewish women have with food, body, and tradition. Discover why it's so complex—and how to create more ease, nourishment, and peace for yourself and your legacy.

[REGISTER](#)

 **QUESTIONS**

Debbie Bettan
Health & Wellness Chair
dbettan@wlcj.org

UPDATES: PROGRAMMING WITH PANACHE

Searching for new programs to showcase and present? Wondering what kinds of educational programs are available to offer?

The WLCJ Kehilah and Education Committee is preparing a third edition of our program guidebook, aiming to refresh our reservoir of ideas for the first time in three years.

Our goal is to create an updated, comprehensive resource filled with spectacular programming and valuable tools to support your Region and Sisterhood Affiliate.

We need your help to fill these pages! Submissions are open to everyone—not just officers—and can cover any topic from recent years or upcoming plans.



Use the form below to submit program ideas. Send any questions to **Fran Hildebrandt** at fhildebrandt@wlcj.org or WhatsApp 248-318-8301.

**The deadline to submit programs is
Wednesday, March 25.**

[SUBMIT A PROGRAM HERE](#)



REGISTER

Create Your Own Israel Flag Purse Charm

Kits must be ordered by February 27!

Create your own Israel flag purse charm with us on Zoom to show your support for Israel! Kits are available for purchase through Jody Glass at glass.jody@gmail.com for \$15, with a discounted rate of \$9 for any additional kits shipped to the same home. While the event takes place Thursday, March 12, at 7:30 pm, **place your orders via Zelle, PayPal, or check by February 27.**

WLCJ WORKSHOP: TOOLBOX TALKS SERIES



If you said yes, then Toolbox Talks for Sisterhood Affiliates is for you!

Join us for one session, all six, or however many work with your schedule.

Register

Announcing: Toolbox Talks for Sisterhood Affiliates
a dynamic Zoom series open to all Women's League members

Are you looking for solutions to today's leadership challenges?
Would you like to learn the difference between having a title and being an effective leader?
Do you want to turn goals into accomplishments?

Upcoming Toolbox Talks sessions:

February 5, 2026
March 5, 2026
May 7, 2026
June 4, 2026

Anise Parnes
WLCJ International Vice President and
Consulting Services Vice Chair
aparnes@wlcj.org

WL READS

 ONLINE

**Sunday, April 12, 2026
at 1:00 pm ET**



Join WL Reads for a lively conversation with international bestselling author Randy Susan Meyers. Known for her compelling voice and acclaimed novels, Meyers will discuss her latest book, *The Many Mothers of Ivy Puddingstone*, a thought-provoking exploration of altruism, justice, and sacrifice. **Registration is now open.** Read along and join us on Sunday, April 12 at 1:00 pm ET—even if you haven't read the book yet.

[REGISTER](#)

 [QUESTIONS](#)

Karen Block
WL Reads Chair
kblock@wlcj.org

WLCJ CONVENTION



[VISIT THE
CONVENTION 2026
WEBSITE](#)



WHEN?

Shabbaton: Friday–
Saturday, July 10–11, 2026
Convention: Sunday–
Wednesday, July 12–15,
2026



WHERE?

**The Hilton Alexandria
Mark Center**
5000 Seminary Road,
Alexandria, VA 22311



[Click here](#) or on the image
to go to the online
application or

[here for PDF](#) version.

NEW - [Click here](#) to view
the video of the application
procedure.

PURCHASE YOUR AD FOR THE CONVENTION 2026 VIRTUAL AD JOURNAL TODAY!

Don't let the moment pass without honoring the people who make our community shine. Whether it's a thank you, "*mazel tov*," or a personal note of appreciation and gratitude, now is the time to secure your spot in the Virtual Ad Journal!

[PURCHASE YOUR AD](#)

WEEKLY WORDS OF TORAH



The WWOT, the Weekly Words of Torah, each week through the end of June 2026, will connect to the **2025-2026 / 5786** Torah Fund general campaign, *Oseh Shalom* – Maker of Peace. To read more Weekly Words of Torah, [click here](#).

Parashat Terumah

In a Torah portion detailing the blueprints for the *Mishkan*, we focus on the call for *terumah*—the raw materials needed to create a sanctuary for the Divine. Through an analysis of one of the more surprising components listed among the sanctuary’s materials, Rabbi Margie Cella explores how the partnership between human effort and Divine presence challenges us to reach beyond the ordinary, and perhaps to unbelievable lengths, to bring our unique gifts to the world.

READ THIS WEEK’S WWOT

OTHER WLCJ PROGRAM REMINDERS

Click the image to explore each program series and to register.



MATHILDE'S
MASTER CLASS

Sessions will meet on a Tuesday night each month over Zoom at 7:30PM ET Nov 11, Dec 9, Jan 13, Feb 10, March 10, April 14, May 12, June 9

MAKOM B'YACHAD



Makom
B'Yachad

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday

**12 noon ET, 9am PT, 10am MT, and
11am CT**

A virtual service for our WLCJ Sisters to recite *Mishaberach* (the Prayer for Healing) and Psalms, and study *Kaddish*.

<https://zoom.us/j/630830287>

Meeting ID: 630 830 287

Password: 875936

WL WEEK

DONATE TO WLCJ

SHARE YOUR SISTERHOOD HAPPENINGS WITH US!

Look for all the info both here and on our Website & Facebook pages.



Follow the Garden State Region!

If you would like to contribute a flyer or picture to upload please forward to [Ilene Rothman](#) and [Sheila Kaufman](#).

Click [here](#) to connect with the Garden State Region Facebook page.

Click [here](#) to visit the Garden State Region website.

Make sure to click both **Like** and **Follow**. It's another great way to learn about everything happening in our Region.



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Subscribe to Newsletter

Ilene Rothman
GSR Secretary Communications / Newsletter Editor
gsrcommunications@wlcj.org

Garden State Region Women's League for Conservative Judaism | 3080 Broadway Suite K900 | New York, NY 10027 US

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