Garden State Region News - November 20, 2026

Garden State Region
WOMEN'S LEAGUE FOR CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM

Visit GSR Website

GSR. 2026-27 Calendar

WL Week

HAPPY THANKSGIVING
Our Next Issue is on December 11th!





We are Women's League
STAND WITH ISRAEL

In This Issue

- Message from Sindy Manas, GSR President
- Message from Ilene Weber, GSR VP Torah Fund
- Photo Collage from GSR Torah Fund Event at Temple Beth Ahm, Nov. 15th
- Sisterhood Happenings at Congregation Torat El - Oakhurst
- **Register for Coffee & Connections Dec.16th 7:30 on Zoom**
- Register for Sichot Beyn Achayont Session 2 and 3
- Donate to Giving Tuesday

Thanksgiving Message from Sindy Manas, GSR President



Dear Affiliate,

When I think about Thanksgiving, I don't think first about the turkey or the pie. I am thinking about being together, with family and with friends, around a table. That's how it was when I was growing up.

Thanksgiving was a two-stop holiday. We started the day with my dad's side of the family. It was a small group, just a few of us, and dinner there was quiet and close. Then, when the plates were cleared, we headed over to my mom's family for dessert. Her side was much bigger, and walking into that house meant a crowd of aunts, uncles and cousins, lots of talking, and a table full of sweets. Back then everyone lived near each other, so two gatherings in one day wasn't a big production. It was simply what we did.

Things are different now. Our family is spread out across the country, and getting everyone in the same place has become much harder. Some years it just isn't possible.

That has taught me not to take any gathering for granted. When we do manage to sit down together, I appreciate it more than I did as a child, when I assumed it would always be that easy.

The last few years have also brought a new tradition I never could have imagined. My son, Andrew, has been in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. This year is a special one: on Thursday, November 26, the parade marches for the 100th time. It began in 1924, but it was canceled in 1942, 1943 and 1944, when the rubber and helium for the balloons went to the war effort, which is why the 100th parade falls this year. And Andrew will be part of it again.

There's something special about watching a tradition that has been part of so many families' Thanksgiving mornings for a hundred years, and knowing my own son is in it. Millions of people will tune in to see the giant balloons. I'll be watching for Andrew as he marches with the Tom Turkey float!

People sometimes ask if I go into the city to watch him. I'm happy to stay home and watch on TV, looking for him in the crowd of balloons, floats and marchers. Then, once the parade is over, Andrew joins us for dinner. It's a little like the Thanksgivings of my childhood: the day has two parts, and it ends with the people I love at the table.

As the years have gone by, I've come to see that Thanksgiving isn't about one perfect table with everyone around it. The people we love find their way into the day even when they can't be there in person, with a phone call, a photo of someone else's turkey, or a few minutes catching up with cousins on the other side of the country. And friends have filled some of the empty seats. A few of them have become family in every way that counts.

What hasn't changed since I was a child is the feeling of the day. It's a pause in the year to look around and notice how much we have, and who we have. The houses and the miles between us are different now, but that part is the same.

This year I'm grateful for the memories of those two-stop Thanksgivings, for the family who still finds ways to come together even across long distances, and for a son who will march down the streets of New York in a historic parade and then come home for dinner.

Wherever you spend the holiday, and whoever is at your table, I wish you and your families a happy and memorable Thanksgiving.

Shabbat Shalom,

Sindy

Sindy Manas
Garden State Region President
gsrpresident21@wlcj.org

Message from Ilene Weber - GSR VP Torah Fund

How the benefits of volunteering strengthed Our Region's Torah Fund Event



Dear Sisters,

Recently, while browsing through quotations by Albert Einstein, I came across one that I found particularly poignant:
“Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile.”
I began to think about the benefits of volunteering. I wanted to find something in the research that paralleled what I feel when working on Torah Fund. I was curious whether science could help explain why giving our time and energy to something we believe in can be so rewarding.

Here's what I found:
• Volunteering reinforces a sense of identity, purpose, and meaning, particularly during major life transitions such as retirement.
• Giving back can activate the brain's reward pathways, contributing to improved mood, reduced stress, and an increased sense of happiness and well-being.
• Regular social interaction and the emotional fulfillment of community involvement can help combat isolation, strengthen emotional resilience, and reduce loneliness.
• Research suggests that volunteering may contribute to better cardiovascular health, including lower blood pressure, partly through reduced stress and increased social engagement.
• Studies have found an association between volunteering and lower overall mortality rates, even after accounting for certain differences in age and health.

Each of these benefits is compelling on its own. Together, they represent a wonderful package of rewards that I—and hopefully you—experience through volunteering. We set out to give to others, but often receive so much in return.

There are many volunteers in the Garden State Region who devote countless hours to Torah Fund. To all of you, whether you are out in front and visible or working quietly behind the scenes, THANK YOU! Your time, dedication, and commitment are valued and appreciated. Every contribution matters.

Last week, our Region Torah Fund event, ***"Women in Song: Where We Belong,"*** was a beautiful celebration filled with appreciation and recognition of the work we do. We had the wonderful opportunity to learn from our speaker, Esther Schwartz, about her journey to the Cantorate and to honor two dedicated women, Marlene Oslick and Meryl Balaban. We also recognized our affiliates who reached their Torah Fund goals during the last campaign and expressed our gratitude to everyone who participated.

Perhaps that is one of the greatest gifts of volunteering. We come together to give of ourselves, but in doing so, we receive so much more than we might ever have anticipated. The friendships, the shared accomplishments, the sense of purpose, and the knowledge that we are making a difference are gifts in themselves.

As Helen Keller said, "Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much."

May we continue to find joy in giving, strength in working together, and fulfillment in knowing that through Torah Fund, we are helping secure the future of our Conservative/Masorti movement.

Enjoy the pictures, below, from our Torah Fund Program, and I extend my personal thank you and gratitude to the women who made the event phenomenal and such a great success!

Shabbat Shalom,

Ilene Weber
VP Torah Fund - Garden State Region
ileneweber22@gmail.com

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Click HERE to donate to this year's 2026-27 Torah Fund Campaign
Click HERE to participate in the Torah Fund Legacy Society
Click Here for Latest Issue of Chadashot
Click Here for FAQs about Torah Fund
Click HERE to send a Torah Fund E-Card
Any questions please e-mail **Ilene Weber.** GSR VP Torah Fund

Todah Rabah to the Torah Fund Committee

An event like this takes many hands to bring together. ***Todah Rabah*** to Sindy Manas, Ilene Rothman, Lynette Seader, Sheila Kaufman, Nancy Mayrowetz, Donna Franklin, Teri Manes, Teresa Samtur, Heddy Belman, Cory Schneider, Michael Balaban, Marci Oslick, and the GSR Torah Fund Team of Sharon Hammerman, Elise Norwitz, Janice Saferstein, Donna Burkat, and Susan Sferas, as well as the Sisterhood of Temple Beth Ahm. All of your efforts contributed to make this event such a success!
Sincerely,
Ilene Weber, GSR VP Torah Fund



PAST GARDEN STATE BRANCH PRESIDENTS, PAST REGION PRESIDENTS and PIP
Row 1: Past Branch President Janet Arnowitz, Honoree and Central Branch President Marlene Oslick, Honoree and 1st GSR President,Meryl Balaban, Past Branch President Marion Mohl, Past Branch President Penny Leifer
Row 2: Past Branch President & GSR Advisor: Heddy Belman, Past Region Presidents Lynette Seader, Ilene Rothman, GSR President Sindy Manas, past RP's Teresa Samtur, Sheila Kaufman, with Past Internaional President Cory Schneider



Look for more photos from our Torah Fund Event in our next Newsletter on December 11th.

We will feature pictures of our Affiliates receiving their Torah Fund Certificates who made goal 2025-26



WOMEN IN SONG, WHERE WE BELONG
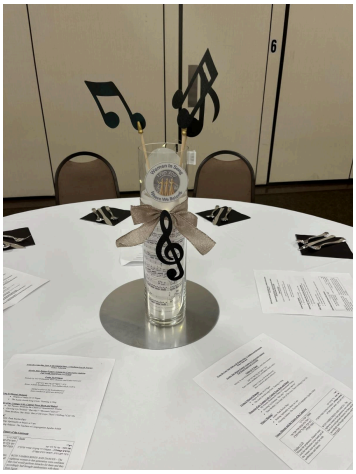































Sisterhood Happenings at CONGREGATION TORAT EL - OAKHURST, NJ



Sisterhood's Outreach at Thanksgiving
Helping Our Community

Diane Resnick - Sisterhood President

For more than five years at Congregation Torat El, our Sisterhood members active in community service have partnered with Jewish

Family and Children's Service of Monmouth County to collect yams and apples as part of the organization's Thanksgiving outreach to support underserved families.

Sisterhood promotes the food drive to the entire congregation. Four Sisterhood members host convenient neighborhood drop off locations. We collect donations over three days and then consolidate the apples and yams for pick up by the organization.

In 2024, the drive collected 95 lbs. of food. In 2025, the total increased to 125 lbs. It is hoped the amount will increase in 2026. We increased from two to four drop off locations on members porches.





CTE SISTERHOOD PROGRAMMING - BELLA -AN IMMIGRANT'S TALE

On October 25, 2026, Congregation Torat El's Sisterhood hosted actress Vicky Summers as she performed her one-woman play Bella, An Immigrant's Tale.

In the performance, Summers portrayed her grandmother's journey from the pogroms of Russia to a new life in the United States. The program concluded with a slide show, a question and answer session, and a meaningful discussion about the importance of documenting family histories and preserving the stores of our ancestors for future genertions.

The event was coordinated by Sisterhood Member, Jackie Rosenheck and a dedicated Sisterhood committee that worked for several months to ensure every detail for the performance.

The reception was carefully planned. Seventy six people, including families with teenage children attended the program that was thoroughly enjoyed by all.



GSR Coffee & Connections - Register for Zoom Wednesday, December 16, 7:30PM

Garden State Region Women's League for Conservative Judaism

Presents

"Our Jewish Responsibility as Guardians of Creation"
Wednesday, December 16, 2026 at 7:30 PM
Presenter: Rabbi Melanie Aron,
Co-Chair of the Jewish Earth Alliance

The Torah calls upon us to be Shomrei Adama-Stewards of the Earth- in order to protect and preserve it for future generations. Please join us for a workshop with Rabbi Melanie Aron, a Jewish educator, scholar, and environmental activist who will lead us in a discussion about why we, as Jews, need to be concerned about the environment using Jewish texts as our guide. In addition to changes, we can make as individuals and organizations to promote environmental stewardship, we will discuss the importance of legislative initiatives and international agreements to protect our planet.



Register here to obtain the Zoom link for our program

This program is being offered at no charge on Zoom. Registration required to attend. A recording will be offered to all registrants.

For questions, please contact Helene Knee at kneenote@gmail.com

Register Here

Learn more about Jewish Earth Alliance

LIVE at B'NAI TIKVAH -SIX/13 Sponsored EBJC and B'NAI TIKVAH



SEND HANUKAH GREETINGS WITH TORAH FUND E-CARDS



SEND YOUR HANUKAH GREETINGS WITH A TORAH FUND E-CARD!

Brighten the holiday season for your friends, family, and coworkers with our beautiful Hanukah e-card! For just $5, you can send a thoughtful holiday greeting and even schedule it to arrive at the perfect time.

The best part is 100% of the proceeds will benefit Women League for Conservative Judaism's Torah Fund campaign, which supports scholarships, programs, and special projects in the worldwide Conservative/Masorti institutions of higher Jewish learning.

Spread a little light, share some joy, and make a difference this Hanukah!

WLCJ INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS - See WL Week for complete listing

REGISTER FOR SICHOT BEYN ARAYOT SESSIONS 2 and 3

***Sichot beyn Achayot* – Conversations Between Sisters**

SHEMA KOLEINU – HEAR OUR VOICES

There are many ways in which we use our communal voices to strengthen our relationship with God. We will look at three very different instances of using our voices for *Tikkun Olam,* repairing our world, while imploring God to hear us and support us.

Session 2: The Power of Our Voices – Giving a Voice to Those Unable to Speak for Themselves

Sunday | November 22 | 12:00 pm ET | Zoom

Our voices form such an integral part of our worship, through singing, talking, and studying. But what about those among us who are non-speaking? We will look at how, using new technological advances, we can enable those who are non-speaking to fully engage in religious life.

GUEST SPEAKERS Information

- Dror Levy, Founder and CEO of BarVox
- Orly Ziv-Maxin, Speech-Language Pathologist and BarVox Consultant
- Rabbi Judith Edelman Green, Rabbi-Chaplain at *Tel Hashomer* Hospital
- Judy Chinitz, Founder and Director of Hand to Mouth Learning Center

REGISTER HERE

Session 3: Raising Women's Voices in Prayer

Sunday | December 20 | 12:00 pm ET | Zoom

This year we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the first ordination of women cantors at JTS. We will look at the *halachic* process involved

in bringing that to fruition, as well as how the role of cantor has changed over time. We will also speak with some Israeli women who serve as *shlichot tzibbur* (prayer leaders) in their *Masorti* congregations.

GUEST SPEAKERS Information

REGISTER HERE.

Register Here

TOOL BOX TALKS - SESSION 2 - DECEMBER 3rd, 7:30 PM on ZOOM



Simple Solutions for Small and Non-Traditional Sisterhood Challenges

Thurs | Dec 3 | 7:30 pm ET | Zoom

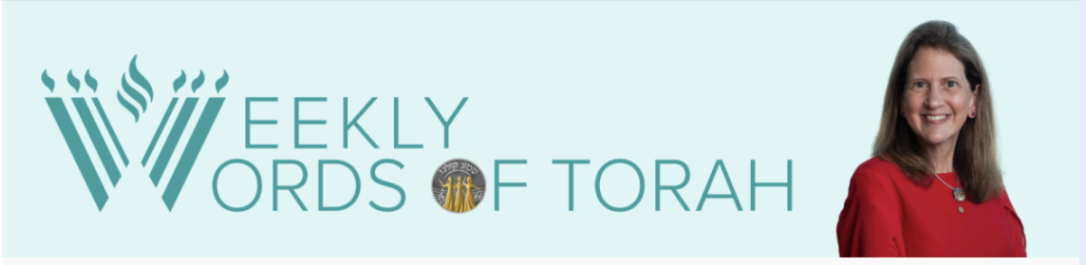
Presented by:

Margie Miller, Leadership Institute Lead Trainer

This is the second session in a Zoom series open to all Women's League members.

Register Here

Weekly Words of Torah



Read WWOT for *Parashat Vayetzei*

Written by WLCJ Executive Director Rabbi Ellen S. Wolintz-Fields

In Parashat Vayetzei, Jacob leaves home alone, fleeing conflict and stepping into an uncertain future. At the beginning of his journey, he dreams of a ladder connecting heaven and earth, with angels ascending and descending. In that moment of isolation, God speaks directly to him, promising presence, protection,

and return. Jacob awakens and declares, “Surely God is in this place, and I did not know it.”

Read On-Parashat Vayetzei

COMING SOON! WL GIVING TUESDAY CAMPAIGN BEGINS ON DEC. 1ST

PLEASE SUPPORT MASORTI WOMEN'S DAY OF STUDY



WLCJ Giving Tuesday - Click to Donate



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

List of Additional WLCJ resources and shortcuts here.

Jewish Learning resources, Click here

Sharing our Simchas

Mazel Tov to Sheila and Stuart Kaufman, celebrating their 33rd wedding anniversary

Mazel tov to Ilene and Philip Rothman on the promotion of their daughter Alexie Rothman to Deputy Chief of the Securities Division of the Southern District of New York Department of Justice.

Yoshe Koach to our Torah Fund Honorees Meryl Balaban and Marlene Oslick. May

you go from strength to strength. We love you and extend our thanks from the GSR for all you have done to strengthen our Garden State Region.

Support the Garden State Region - Donate to Our Funds:

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.

Please specify which fund(s) to make the donation to.Donna Franklin, GSR Treasurer
Mail your check payable to "GSR-WLCJ" to Donna Franklin,7 Liddy Place, West Caldwell, NJ. 07006. email mumzynj@gmail.com
Donations can also be made via Credit Card.

Please Notify Us of your Happenings

If you would like to contribute a flyer or picture to our newsletter please forward to **Lynette Seader .**

Follow the Garden State Region!

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.

We are Women's League
Engaging, Enriching and Empowering Jewish Women
Women's League for Conservative Judaism

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Garden State Region
WOMEN'S LEAGUE FOR CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM

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