



DISTANCE WORKSHOP

Planting Your Sisterhood's Vineyard

A year of innovative programming

August 19, 2015

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Programming for sisterhoods falls into a few categories

- cultural programming: holidays, ritual
- social action programs
- creative – CJA, writing
- personal enrichment; wellness and learning
- intergenerational
- Books/films
- Women's League Shabbat

The theme: *Nat'ah Karem*

Each year WLCJ/TF sponsor a joint theme that can be the focus of some of your programming. The theme (as focus) has several functions: It connects your sisterhood to the national organization; it reinforces a particular religious/cultural/spiritual value through your programming; it provides you with some programmatic continuity to your organization (i.e. sisterhood) throughout the year.

The theme of *Nat'ah karem, she plants a vineyard* is derived from the Eishet Chayil poem that highlights a particular type of woman – a woman of industry, creativity, productivity and foresight. We have sought to redefine this woman – not the stereotypical balabuste that became the paradigm of the *eishet chayil* of the 19th century – but a woman whose work is beneficial, not only to those

immediately around her, but to future generations as well. The planting of vineyards is about the present and the future; it suggests present day productivity as well as legacy.

The organizing principle for Nat'ah Karem is a focus on specific women of renown who epitomize this idea of idealized woman of industry, creativity, productivity and foresight. Over the past several years Women's League publications have begun to herald women of achievement, many of whom were long forgotten in the Jewish historical narrative. The domains of accomplishment extend from science and law to religion and the arts. Over the past half decade we have produced several publications about productive, accomplished women.

- *Beauty, Brains and Brawn: The New World Balabuste*
- *With Strength and Splendor: Jewish Women as Agents of Change*
- *CJ Magazine: The New Ushpizot*: Golda Meir; Ruth Bader Ginsberg; Judith Hauptman; Paula Hyman; Debbie Friedman; Judith Resnick; Judy Blume

Another possibility is to recognize women in your own families and communities, to create programs that highlight their accomplishments.

Some of our program suggestions focus on one approach or another, and sometimes the two approaches can be combined.

Programs

Using a collection of Women's League highlighted women, you can tie them into holiday programming .

Sukkot: Host program in a sukkah featuring women of accomplishment
Create visuals - banners/mobile – directions in *Hiddur Mitzvah* (pgs. 16-17)
Variation on this program is to generate your own list of women – women from the synagogue, past and present who have been vital members of your community. Dedicate a day to celebrating them.
BBB mini posters -

Chanukkah: dedicate one night to a woman at synagogue Chanukkah program, feature a night celebrating Jewish women. Remember Mathilde Schechter's birthday is December 16.

Another program variant is to have members bring a photo and short write up about a woman of vision and accomplishment to a program celebrating women. Create some kind of visual – a mural, a scrapbook of your own women.

Tu B'Shevat seder: Use the WLCJ 20 minute seder, with added figures in recognition of the 100th anniversary of WLCJ that we will celebrate at the next convention.

Passover: Create place cards or other kinds of visuals for your seder in which you pair contemporary/modern women with the women of the Passover story:

- Jocheved: Moses' mother – the savior
- Miriam: Moses' sister, the protector and guard
- Shifra and Puah: courageous, defying authority
- Pharaoh's daughter's: acts of kindness

For holiday programming resources and projects of a more generic nature that do not focus on women of note, see *Hiddur Mitzvah*, a great resource for all kinds of holiday celebrations: information about the textual basis for the holiday and rituals attached to their observance; updated recipes for holiday meals; projects for enhancing your home; social action projects. For Rosh Hashanah, there is a history of shanah tovah cards and instructions for making your own; there are instructions for making your own cos miryam for Passover, and omer calendars.

Non-holiday related activities about women of accomplishment

Create programs based upon the WLCJ/CJ list of Ushpizot throughout the year:

1. **Golda:** Israel information/advocacy program; invite in a specialist on particular issue having to do with Israel; host a discussion on a recent book about Israel; invite the rabbi or cantor to talk about current issues in Israel.

Golda's Gems: assemble famous quotes of Golda and hold discussion on her words -- perhaps on her birthday, May 3 - Happy Birthday Golda!— around Yom haAtzmaut - or her *yahrtzeit* 8 Kislev)

2. **Ruth Bader Ginsberg:** host discussion/debate about women/gender and language; how does language create environments that are either hostile to or supportive of women in the work place. Base the discussion on several recent books on the subject: *Lean In* (Sheryl Sandberg); *The Confidence Code* (Katy Kay and Claire Shipman)

Planned Parenthood Discussion: Invite a speaker from Planned Parenthood; invite the rabbi or a specialist in ethics to discuss the recent controversy. Examine the history of Jewish women's support of Planned Parenthood including the piece about Bessie Louise Moses featured in *With Strength and Splendor* (WLCJ)

Collect for local women's shelters or schools; collect books for local school libraries; food pantries

3. **Debbie Friedman**
Invite a speaker, perhaps your rabbi or cantor to lead a program of music based on Debbie Friedman's work – teaching about her legacy
4. **Judy Blume**
The importance and value of children's literature – invite a teacher or panel of teachers to examine some of Judy Blume's work for the values they teach;

host a special person and me story hour with value-rich children's books
5. **Judith Hauptman and Paula Hyman:** Celebrate these two feminist scholars through activities throughout March, Women's History Month.

March: Women's History Month – month log dedication to women of accomplishment

Ask for a site on your synagogue website – provide a photo and brief biography of Jewish women of note, daily, throughout the month. It can be any mix of women – historical figures and/or significant women from your own congregation

Throughout the month send a daily e-mail to sisterhood members with women of accomplishment

Conclude the month long observance with a tea or other kind of celebration about women in March. Invite different generations of women from your families. Invite guests from local organizations as guests.

Ask women in your sisterhood to each be responsible for finding a woman, researching and providing the information and visuals

Other general programs related to the theme

Programs around wine

- 1.** Special Kiddush cups: Invite members to bring in special Kiddush cups and talk about them. If possible, exhibit them one Shabbat – identifying each one with a short write up.
- 2.** Wine tasting – before holidays, ask local wine store to do tasting and have wine sale
- 3.** Wine and Whine

Ethical wills

Study about and then write your own ethical will; guidelines are available from WLCJ

Film Forum, Wo-Flix on women of accomplishment/creating a legacy