

Israel and the Progressive Movement - 1987

Issue

To observe the 40th Anniversary of the State of Israel. To advance the cause of Progressive Judaism in Israel. To help create an open, pluralistic and free society in Israel.

Background

With prayers of thanksgiving we anticipate the 40th Anniversary observance of the establishment of the State of Israel. With admiration, we acknowledge Israel's extraordinary achievement, against overwhelming obstacles and assaults, to create a strong and significant national home for its citizens and a spiritual home for the whole household of the Jewish people. As we rejoice, we rededicate ourselves to the struggle to preserve the security of Israel from its enemies without and to protect the integrity of Judaism from its enemies within.

During the past year, religious tensions in Israel have reached unprecedented levels. Orthodox Judaism has been radicalized and extremists have taken to the streets in a campaign against the State of Israel and its laws. Such activity has alienated many Israelis who have rejected Orthodoxy but have not found fulfillment as secular Jews. There is widespread evidence that many Israelis are searching for new forms of religious expression.

Israel's political system provides the Orthodox with a disproportionate influence in the Knesset which permeates throughout the government and its agencies. The Orthodox establishment has made every effort to prevent Progressive and Conservative Judaism from taking root in Israel by monopolizing the funding mechanisms and by seeking to amend the Law of Return.

The Reform Movement is deeply committed to Israel but has become increasingly disillusioned by the discrimination it experiences and by the concerted efforts of the ultra-Orthodox to make halachah the law of the land.

Resolution

The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods:

- 1) Congratulates the World Union for Progressive Judaism and the Hebrew Union College for their foresight and determination to build the World Education Center for Progressive Judaism in Jerusalem, a magnificent complex of buildings in the heart of Israel which will serve as an educational center for Israelis and visitors from abroad of all ages, and urges its member Sisterhoods to promote among young and old the travel and study programs offered at the Center;
- 2) Applauds the Reform institutions: Association of Reform Zionists of America (ARZA), Kadima, Central Conference of American Rabbis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Union of American Hebrew Congregations and World Union for Progressive Judaism, for their partnership efforts that have resulted in increased funding for the programs and institutions of the Progressive Movement in Israel. We congratulate ARZA especially for its effective strategic campaign to change the funding patterns of the Jewish Agency, and we urge members in other nations to advance the efforts of their Reform or Progressive Zionist Agencies;
- 3) Commends the Reform and Progressive institutions for establishing the Israel Religious Action Center which is dedicated to promote the Progressive Movement in Israel, to fight for recognition of the rights of Progressive Jews and to advocate issues of social justice, including the rights of women and the status of Israeli Arabs;
- 4) Calls upon its member Sisterhoods to continue their support of and cooperation with the World Union for

Progressive Judaism, ARZA and Kadima and to continue their advocacy efforts on behalf of Progressive Judaism through already established means within their respective countries; and

5) Urges its affiliates throughout the world to observe the 40th Anniversary of the State of Israel through special events and programs, within Sisterhood and cooperatively with the congregation and Jewish community, and through increased travel to Israel by young people as well as adults for educational and cultural purposes and family celebration.