

Israel - 1977

On the eve of the 30th Anniversary of the State of Israel, we congratulate this heroic nation for her historic achievements: the building of cities out of desert wastes to house, educate and care for all who emigrate there; the development of commerce and industry to maintain a modern economy; and the creation of a cultural and spiritual atmosphere to enhance the quality of life of all her citizens. We record our pride that Israel, fulfilling our Judaic mandate “to be a light unto the nations,” has shared and continues to demonstrate her willingness to share her technological, scientific, medical and social welfare developments with other nations both near and far.

We applaud the State of Israel for her life-saving efforts rescuing survivors in the aftermath of the Holocaust, offering refuge to displaced Jews from Arab lands, and providing a way to Jewish life for Russian Jewry. The Law of Return makes it possible for all Jews, who wish to make Aliyah and to share in the rebuilding of Zion. We call on the leaders of the State of Israel to reaffirm the Law of Return and to make no changes that would deny Jewish status to persons converted to Judaism by non-Orthodox Rabbis. Such actions, if taken would surely undermine the unity of the Jewish people and the spiritual centrality of Israel to the Diaspora and would discourage Aliyah.

We are proud of the young men and women of Kibbutz Yahel, those already there and those preparing to fulfill their commitment. Like the early pioneers of Eretz Yisrael, they are turning barren lands into a flourishing settlement and creating a ma’ayan bamidbar—a spring in the desert—to refresh and renew the spirits of those that gather there. We salute these modern pioneers who take not only their physical strength to the building of a new home but also their commitment to Jewish values and social idealism. They dare to fashion a community of Progressive Judaism into a beacon of spiritual light for all.

We wholeheartedly endorse the NFTS project Ma’ayan Bamidbar to build a study center where young people from all over the world can assemble for an experience in Jewish living and learning, sharing the opportunity to build with their Israeli brothers and sisters.

We are grievously disappointed that despite Israel’s efforts and offers there is yet no just and lasting peace between her and her Arab neighbors. World Jewry is united in support of the State of Israel as she seeks a peaceful settlement guaranteeing her secure borders and normal relationships with her neighbors. We believe that an independent and secure State of Israel is essential in protecting the vital interests of the United States in the Middle East and of all nations who wish to live in a peaceful, just world. We affirm our solidarity in support of the State of Israel in her pursuit of peace and development, and we pledge our unremitting advocacy with our respective governments to remain firm in their commitments—both within and without the United Nations and its agencies—to preserve Israel’s integrity and independence in all negotiating matters and in her participation in the various councils of the UN.

In this critical, fluid period of discussion and possible steps toward a renewed Geneva Conference, we call upon our affiliates to educate themselves, other Jews, and non-Jews about the following issues crucial to Israel’s survival and to express their views on these issues:

- 1) The Palestine Liberation Organization which claims credit for many acts of terrorism, holds implacable hatred of Israel and stands for her destruction has no place in negotiations dedicated to a peaceful future until it changes its charter and fully recognizes Israel’s right to exist.

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2) Peace can only be achieved through direct negotiations based on UN Resolutions 242 and 338, not on any terms imposed by the great powers or others.

3) Resolution 242 calls for a just settlement of the refugee problem and the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the area, behind secure and recognized boundaries. It does not and should not mean the creation of an independent Palestinian state on Israel's border, easily capable of strikes against her which can only heighten instability in the area. Settlement of the refugee problem in the Middle East involves a two-way effort for there are Jewish refugees as well as Arab refugees.

Furthermore we urge our members to follow closely all political and diplomatic developments in the Middle East, welcoming initiatives but remaining alert always to the necessity of promptly informing governmental leaders, the press and other public opinion forums of any dangers to Israel's security or to peace in the area, and we urge our United States members to express appreciation to the Administration for its stated and often proven dedication to Israel's security, but to object persistently and frankly to any actions by the United States which violate agreements with Israel or place diplomatic pressure upon her, thus endangering her right to free and independent action.

In the words of Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations: "In interpreting vital issues about Israel to our fellow citizens we will be serving the interests of our own country and the cause of Middle East peace—and thus the security and dignity of all Jews."