

# Israel and the Middle East - 1983

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## Issue

- 1) Diaspora/Israel Relationships.
- 2) The security of the State of Israel and the welfare of its people.
- 3) Peace and stability in the Middle East.

## Background

Throughout millennia the Jewish people of the Diaspora yearned for Zion. By whatever name, the land now called Israel was the major spiritual center of aspiration for our people. But this reality does not mean all Jews should live in the State nor that a strong, educated and dedicated Diaspora Jewry is unimportant. Rather Israel and the Diaspora are interdependent with each needing the other. This interdependence places responsibility to express to Israel its concerns. Of particular concern to the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods is the right of religious pluralism in Israel.

Throughout its history as a state, Israel has been surrounded by hostile neighbors unwilling to recognize her right to exist and the security of her borders. Today, the potential for peace for Israel and the Middle East has been made more complicated by events in Lebanon.

Lebanon, a country smaller than the state of Connecticut, with a population of some 3,000,000 plus, has been torn by civil war for a number of years. Formed from five former Turkish Empire districts, it became a state on September 1, 1920 and was under a French mandate from then until 1941. Under the 1943 National Covenant, public positions were divided among the different religious communities with the Christians holding the majority. By the 1970's the Moslems were in the majority and demanded a larger economic and political role. Complicating the internal religious and political strife, was, and is, the intrusion of Syria and the PLO. Thousands of lives and billions of dollars of property have been lost in the conflicts.

## Resolutions

As a consistent expression for the security of Israel and the welfare of the people there, as well as for the advance of peace in all nations in the area, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods now reaffirms its unflinching support and expresses these concerns and convictions:

1. The government of the United States and that of every nation shall recognize undivided Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel and the proper location for embassies. The knowledge that the holy places of all faiths shall continue to be protected by Israel and freely open to those who cherish them should be widely circulated.
2. While the people and government of Israel are the determiners of their own domestic and foreign policy, we nevertheless urge:
  1. Sensitivity to the rights of Palestinians and negotiated accommodation on the difficult
  2. Withdrawal from Lebanon of Syrian, Israeli and any remaining PLO forces.
3. The tragedy of the civil war in Lebanon can only be overcome through new negotiations in that country between and among the religious and ethnic factions and the central government. A necessary balance of power must be established through distribution of government portfolios reflective of the various constituencies.

4. We adhere to the Camp David Agreements as the best formula, when fully implemented, for peace in the area and we again commend Israel on her sacrifices in the Sinai toward this end. We urge Israel and her neighbors, including Jordan, to move forward together in establishing secure and peaceful coexistence.
5. We call upon all nations, whether within or without the Middle East, to recognize the urgent need of helping the peoples and countries of the area attain stable economic conditions without interference in their internal or external affairs.
6. We believe a strong Diaspora and a strong Israel are mutually interdependent and necessary for the survival of the Jewish faith and people. We continue to be committed to the raising of Jewish funds for Israel as a duty for every Jew. We continue to encourage aliyah in our ranks, whether through recruitment for Reform settlements or through individual decisions to live in the land. At the same time, we oppose those in Israel who would alter the Law of Return and who continue to deny religious rights to Reform and Conservative Jewry. These acts harm the unity of the Jewish people and ultimately are injurious to the State. To assure the continuation of the mutuality between Israel and the Diaspora, we call upon Israel to resist amendments to the Law of Return and urge all constituents to take the necessary steps to express their concern to the government of Israel.
7. Deep sympathy is extended to Israel and her armed forces as well as to the families of those killed or wounded by the recent bomb attack on Israeli headquarters in Southern Lebanon. This tragedy, like all previous terrorist attacks on Israel's military or civilian personnel, serves no purpose other than to complicate further the possibility of peace and security. Such violence must be strongly condemned not only by Western powers but also by all Arab states in the area.
8. We commend the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and the World Union for Progressive Judaism on their creative programs and building plans, undertaken in cooperation with the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism and the government of Israel.