

A Time For Peace - 2000

Guardian of Israel and Redeemer of all the world,
grant that Zion may become a light to the nations.
(Gates of Prayer, p. 414)

In the mid-1999 elections Prime Minister Ehud Barak won the support of the Israeli voters because he pledged to complete the Oslo peace process and to make progress in determining the role of religious law in a modern, pluralistic, and democratic state.

In the signing of the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum in September 1999, Prime Minister Barak committed Israel to a permanent status agreement within a year. He expressed his desire "to bring an end to violence and suffering and to work with the Palestinian leadership under Chairman Yasser Arafat . . . in order to jointly arrive at a fair settlement for co-existence in peace, prosperity and good neighborliness . . ." He also called on President Assad of Syria to resume peace negotiations to achieve a comprehensive and stable peace in the Middle East.

Israelis and Palestinians are continuing their negotiations to resolve all outstanding issues, such as the status of Jerusalem, Palestinian statehood, and boundaries, Jewish settlements, and the rights of Palestinian refugees. They understand that in framing a comprehensive peace the rights and needs of all parties must be respected. In committing himself to the security of Israel, Prime Minister Barak has declared that Israel will not allow terrorism or violence to derail peace efforts.

In forming his coalition government, Prime Minister Barak chose partners on the basis of their support for his peace efforts. WRJ is pleased that Prime Minister Barak has also repeatedly expressed to the Reform Movement and others that he will not lend his support to any action, legislative or otherwise, the aim or consequence of which is to divide the Jewish people. His commitment to bringing about a comprehensive peace with Israel's neighbors has set a tone that can be the bridge to furthering religious pluralism and equality for all Israelis.

Recent surveys within Israel have shown a growing demand for changing the relationship between religion and state. Over the last year the Progressive Movement in Israel has experienced a significant increase in requests for life cycle celebrations such as Bar/Bat Mitzvahs and weddings. A network of synagogues and community centers are now on the drawing boards giving promise to a vigorous and growing Reform (Progressive) Judaism in Israel.

In our unfailing support of Israel and consistent with our established resolutions recognizing Israel's progress toward achieving peace with its neighbors and affirming support for Israel as a pluralistic democratic society, the Executive Committee calls on WRJ sisterhoods to take every opportunity within congregations and local, national and international communities:

1. To commend Prime Minister Barak for his efforts to achieve a lasting peace and to be advocates of his peace initiatives.
2. To acknowledge the growing interest in the Progressive Movement among Israelis and to encourage participation in its program of building synagogue/centers.
3. To reaffirm our support for the cause of freedom of religion in Israel.

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