

## MEDINAT YISRAEL, ERETZ YISRAEL AND YERUSHALAYIM

We last met as an organization in November, 2004, in *Yerushalayim*, to demonstrate our unwavering support for, and dedication to, *Medinat Yisrael* and its people after four years of extraordinary terrorism, pain and sadness that ravaged the country. We celebrated with great pride the resilience of the Israeli people as they stood firm during those trying times and the commitment of our members who continued to visit and send children to study despite the difficulties of those days.

We continue to enhance our connection to the Land. Many of us have already made Aliya. Others pursue plans or dreams for this. Many spend substantial parts of the year in Israel. Many more support children who study or live here today. Tomorrow, we pray, we will all be here – forever.

We continue to share many guiding principles and beliefs, including:

- Our abiding belief that everlasting peace would be the greatest blessing that God could grant the State and people of Israel;
- Our enduring solidarity with the people of Israel, particularly their valiant armed forces and the victims of Arab terror and their families;
- Our admiration and encouragement for those in Israel and North America who express their differences with civility, eschewing behavior, language and terminology of hatred and of vigilantes;
- Our strong support for the measures that Israel has taken to prevent terrorism and unprovoked attacks, and our outrage at spurious challenges to these measures by foreign countries, the United Nations, the World Court and the media; and
- Our desire to see the State of Israel serve as an “*Ohr LaGoyim*” – “a light unto the nations,” reflecting the historic characteristics, values, principles and standards of the Jewish people.

In the two years since we last met, much has transpired in Israel to generate a wide range of poignant emotions among Jews worldwide and our members in particular. Proponents saw in the disengagement from Gaza prospects for minimizing friction with Palestinians, ending an unnecessary burden on the IDF, reducing the demographic threat to the Jewish state, and a new path to peace. Opponents believed that the withdrawal from Gaza would not achieve any of these goals, would only encourage further terrorism, and that evicting Jews from any place is not necessary where there is to be peace. Whatever ones feelings about the wisdom of disengagement, the forced removal of Jews from their homes and synagogues in Gaza, by Jewish soldiers and policemen, was an historically troubling sight. We were, nonetheless, particularly touched and inspired by the tremendous *Kiddush HaShem* created by those evacuees, soldiers, policemen and protestors who respectively resisted, performed their tasks or staged their protests with empathy and respect for the other.

The harassment and prolonged detention of persons lawfully protesting the government's actions caused great concern. In later months, the horrific confrontation at Amona was a tragedy inconsistent with the traditions and values of the Jewish state.

As we witnessed with sorrow the grave illness of Prime Minister Sharon, who served Israel both as a heroic warrior and a committed statesman, the foundation of Israel's democracy proved its resilience through an orderly transition of power and a new electoral cycle. New Israeli leadership pursued a plan for further withdrawals from historically Jewish territories, even as rockets continued to rain from Gaza on Israeli towns. The notion of Jews being separated from the land of their ancestors, with the land relinquished to those who have vowed to pursue Israel's destruction from those lands, has been a source of great anguish for many Jews worldwide.

Indeed, terrorist attacks have continued on Israelis across the land, including the painful cross-border assaults, killings and kidnappings of Israeli soldiers peacefully patrolling on Israeli soil. The sight of Israel at war once more, and the images of yet more Jewish casualties and funerals, has once again rent our hearts.

Yet, despite the trauma of war and the vicious campaign of terrorism that they confront, the Israeli people remain vibrant, creative and committed to nourishing the democratic values of the state. We applaud and view with great pride and admiration an Israeli society that, despite difficulties unimaginable in any other country, continuously strives to build a better social order for its citizens.

And so, with both joy and pain, with causes for celebration and concern, we return here again, united, resolute in our unwavering commitment to the people, to the land and to strengthening the democratic institutions of the State of Israel. For all of us, the Land of Israel remains a primary focal point of Jewish hope and prayer. We reaffirm our abiding commitment to a spiritually vibrant *Medinat Yisrael*, and we pray each day that we will soon see the genuine and lasting peace that the people of Israel have long pursued.

**A. The Continuing Conflict**

The Israeli withdrawal from Gaza provided Palestinians the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to build and govern a modern, peaceful and democratic state. Instead, Palestinians elected a government committed to pursuing the destruction of Israel. Anarchy roils Gaza from within, while Palestinian elements continue to launch rockets and terrorist attacks from Gaza upon Israeli towns and civilians. The Hamas electoral victory, continued unrelenting violence against Israeli civilians and soldiers, and the unprovoked kidnapping of Cpl. Gilad Shalit, only highlight how far Palestinians are from any meaningful steps to the road to peace with Israel.

Likewise, the cause of the recent war in Lebanon was hostile acts initiated by Hezbollah, including a cross-border incursion that killed Israeli soldiers and took others captive and the launching of rockets upon Israeli civilians. Israel's response was fully justified and legal.

Israel responded to Hezbollah's action with the purpose of achieving three legitimate goals: The release of the kidnapped soldiers, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, and their unconditional return to Israel; the cessation of missile and rocket fire against the residents of the State of Israel and against Israeli targets; and a full and complete implementation of United Nations Resolution 1559, including the disarming of all armed militias, enforcement of the sovereignty of the Lebanese government over all its territory and deployment of the Lebanese army along the border with Israel. Israel accepted United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701 with the understanding and expectation that it will bring about these objectives. It seeks the return of all of its other captured or missing soldiers as well.

We further note that Israel conducted its military operations with great moral concern and substantial regard for innocent Lebanese citizens. While Hezbollah set out to kill and harm Israeli civilians, Israel sought merely to defeat the guerilla enemy, while seeking to minimize Lebanese civilian casualties. Cynical tactics employed by Hezbollah guerillas, such as the launching of rockets from the midst of civilian populations, were directly responsible for the loss of Lebanese life when Israel justifiably responded to those attacks. It is regretful that many in the world chose to ignore these grotesque Hezbollah tactics and, instead, condemn Israel and the IDF.

Similarly, the international community now appears too eager to end the isolation of Hamas, which many nations had correctly designated as a terrorist entity. The weakening of the resolve to shun Hamas will serve only to further embolden terrorism.

Syria and Iran, meanwhile, continue to support terrorism. The prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran, whose president has publicly threatened to “wipe Israel off the map,” raises grave concerns for our generation.

Accordingly, we resolve that:

- The Orthodox Union shall continue to lobby the U.S. Administration, the United Nations and international leaders to bring about the complete cessation of all rocket attacks and other hostile actions emanating from Gaza against Israel and to bring about the unconditional release and safe return of Cpl. Gilad Shalit.
- The Orthodox Union shall lobby the U.S. Administration to maintain its refusal to give financial aid or diplomatic recognition to a Palestinian Authority that includes Hamas in its government unless and until Hamas explicitly recognizes Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state, renounces violence, and agrees to honor all past Palestinian agreements with Israel.
- The Orthodox Union shall continue to lobby the U.S. Administration, the United Nations and international leaders to take all measures required to fully and effectively implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701 so that Israeli citizens are secure and free of further attacks from Lebanese soil, Hezbollah is fully disarmed and all captured Israeli soldiers are promptly and safely returned home.
- The Orthodox Union shall continue to support legislation in the United States to deter Syria and Iran from their support of terrorism and to prevent Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons.
- The Orthodox Union shall continue to defend and speak out in support of Israel's right to defend its people with all the force that is necessary to ensure the continued and unmitigated safety of the Israeli people.
- The Orthodox Union deplors the continually biased approach of the United Nations towards the State of Israel.

**B. The Communities of Yehuda and Shomron**

The touchstone of our relationship to the Land of Israel is the *Torah*; we begin with the principle that the Land of Israel is the eternal heritage of the Jewish people.

*Yerushalayim* is the center of our universe. *Chevron* marks the burial place of our Patriarchs and Matriarchs. For a religious Jew, few experiences are more spiritually exhilarating than reciting the very first words of the *Shemona Esrei* – “G-d of Avraham, G-d of Yitzchak, G-d of Yaakov” – at this hallowed spot. At *Kever Rachel*, the Jewish people paused to weep as they were led into exile, prompting Rachel to cry to G-d on their behalf. To this day, we continue to come to these places to beseech G-d.

The rich history of our people, played out in the *Tanach*, resonates throughout the areas of *Yehuda* and *Shomron*. It has been renewed in the vibrant, impressive and thriving Jewish communities that today dot these lands.

The Orthodox Union feels an historic obligation to preserve for the Jewish people the right to live and travel freely and safely in the land of our heritage, including the territories of *Yehuda* and *Shomron*. We believe that there is no part of *Eretz Yisrael* from which Jews should be prevented from living by any other human being absent the most compelling of circumstances.

We are sensitive to prevailing geopolitical realities and the potential that compromise and accommodation could one day bring true security and real peace. Yet, since the Oslo process began, security has not followed from territorial concessions or reliance upon foreign forces to preserve it. Thus, while we strive for security and peace, we are skeptical of any policy that relinquishes part of *Eretz Yisrael* without obtaining both.

Accordingly, we resolve that:

- The Orthodox Union shall act forcefully to implement the principles of this section B through the processes set forth in section D below.

### C. Yerushalayim

*Yerushalayim* represents the cradle of Judaism and has always been its most hallowed site. Our relationship to *Yerushalayim* is one that transcends time, space and other physical constraints, and our attachment to this holy city remains constant in our psyche, spirit and practices, wherever we may be.

Following the Roman destruction of *Yerushalayim* and the forced exile of the Jewish people in 70 C.E., the Jews faithfully reestablished their community in *Yerushalayim*, preserving their legacy and maintaining daily prayer vigils before the Western Wall. That steadfast Jewish presence continued virtually uninterrupted until the wanton and indiscriminate destruction of the Jewish Quarter inflicted by Jordan in May, 1948. For the nineteen years that it remained under Jordanian control, the Old City was closed to Jews of all nationalities and even to Israeli Muslims and Christians. The City of Peace was sundered by Jordanian barbed wire, cinder block and snipers, and the myth of an Arab East Jerusalem was created by those who sought to separate the People of Israel from their history, traditions and holy sites.

Israel's miraculous liberation of the Old City in 1967 and unification of *Yerushalayim* brought with it -- for the first time in centuries -- a guaranty that people of **all** religions could freely access all of the city's holy sites. Under Israeli sovereignty *Yerushalayim* may now be openly explored by all peace-loving persons, regardless of religion or nationality. *Yerushalayim* symbolizes how the Jewish people have seized every opportunity to create, build and restore, to give life to their prayers and dreams, and to show peace to the world. We look forward to celebrating in 2007 the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this milestone.

Accordingly, we resolve that:

- *Yerushalayim* must forever remain the spiritual, cultural and political center of the Jewish people and the State of Israel, and the Orthodox Union is mandated to

undertake all efforts that are necessary to secure and maintain *Yerushalayim* as the eternal and undivided capital of the State of Israel. The Orthodox Union is further mandated to oppose any proposal or plan to relinquish any part of *Yerushalayim* to any foreign authority.

- The Orthodox Union shall continue to lobby the U.S. Administration and Congress to fully implement existing U.S. laws concerning Jerusalem, without waivers and in a manner that fully recognizes *Yerushalayim* as the capital of Israel, including taking action to move the United States embassy to *Yerushalayim*.
- The Orthodox Union will sponsor and galvanize support for programs throughout the Jewish community to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the reunification of *Yerushalayim* and all of the positive aspects that have followed from it. In this regard, the Institute for Public Affairs shall promote efforts in the political arena, NCSY and Yachad shall make *Yerushalayim* a central educational theme in their programming, and other departments shall work to promote an array of 40th anniversary programs in local synagogues.
- The future of the Jewish State is rooted in educating the youth about our heritage and past. Accordingly, the Orthodox Union encourages that all school age children visit *Yerushalayim* at least once in their educational years, ideally as part of the formal curriculum of the State of Israel.

**D. Israel Policy Implementation**

In order to effectuate its policies relating to Israel:

- The Orthodox Union shall continue to use its array of human and physical resources to mobilize communal, public, media and U.S. governmental support for the State of Israel.
- The Orthodox Union shall continue to share, sensitively and with due discretion, with representatives of the Israeli government, in forums and manners deemed appropriate under the prevailing circumstances, the views reflected in these resolutions.
- The Orthodox Union may, in exceptional circumstances, take public positions contrary to those of the Government of Israel. Such actions shall be taken only after approval by the Board of Directors or the Executive Committee on a case-by-case basis.