

Passed  
Resolutions  
החלטות

תש"ע 2010  תש"ע

Rabbinical Assembly  
כנסת הרבנים

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**Proclamation on the Appointment of Rabbi Steven Wernick as the Executive Vice President/CEO  
of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism**

Whereas the mission of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism founded in 1913 is to help strengthen the Conservative movement in Judaism by strengthening Conservative congregations;

Whereas Rabbi Steven Wernick has served the Movement as a congregational rabbi at Temple Beth Sholom (Cherry Hill, New Jersey) and Temple Adath Israel (Merion Station, Pennsylvania) as well as during his student years;

Whereas Rabbi Wernick has an understanding of the challenges and opportunities which our congregations, the United Synagogue and the Conservative movement face today; and

Whereas Rabbi Wernick has shown tremendous energy and wisdom since assuming his role as Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer on July 1, 2009.

Therefore the Rabbinical Assembly applauds the appointment of Rabbi Steven Wernick as the United Synagogue's Executive Vice President/C.E.O. The Rabbinical Assembly wishes him success on this important endeavor of working with the professional and lay leadership of the USCJ to create a vision for the synagogue of the twenty-first century that will reflect the new challenges ahead and a vision for an organization which will help those synagogues. We, as members of the Rabbinical Assembly, pledge our support to Rabbi Wernick as he leads the United Synagogue on our behalf and on behalf of the Conservative movement.

### **Resolution on Hekhsher Tzedek**

“You shall appoint magistrates and officials for your tribes, in all the settlements that the Lord your God is giving you, and they shall govern the people with due justice. You shall not judge unfairly: you shall show no partiality; you shall not take bribes, for bribes blind the eyes of the discerning and upset the pleas of the just. Justice, justice shall you pursue, that you may thrive and occupy the land that the Lord your God is giving you. (Deuteronomy 16: 18 – 20)

Whereas it has been three years since the establishment of the Hekhsher Tzedek Commission, a joint project of the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism to bring the Jewish commitment of ethics and social justice directly into the marketplace and the home;

Whereas since that time the Commission has created Magen Tzedek, the world’s first Jewish ethical certification seal which will help assure consumers that kosher food products are produced in keeping with the highest possible Jewish ethical values and ideals for social justice in the areas of labor concerns, animal welfare, environmental impact, consumer issues and corporate integrity; and

Whereas the Commission is working assiduously to bring the Magen Tzedek seal to market so that businesses can apply for certification of the seal.

Therefore be it resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly thank those synagogues and other institutions who have given their support to Magen Tzedek in the past and encourage other synagogues and institutions to lend their support for this important effort;

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly acknowledge the financial support from the Rabbinical Assembly, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism and individual RA colleagues so that Hekhsher Tzedek can continue its important work;

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly reaffirm its support of Hekhsher Tzedek and will redouble its effort to sustain Hekhsher Tzedek financially and through advocating on its behalf;

Be it further resolved that members of the Rabbinical Assembly continue to support and promote Hekhsher Tzedek and Magen Tzedek among Conservative Jews through sermons, articles and educational materials; and

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly commend the tireless efforts and countless hours of those who have helped to bring Hekhsher Tzedek and Magen Tzedek into reality, among them Rabbi Morris Allen, Project Director; Rabbi Michael Siegel and Jerold Jacobs, co-chairs of the Hekhsher Tzedek Commission; Dr. Joe Regenstein, professor of Food Science at Cornell University, who developed the guidelines and standards for the Magen Tzedek application process and certification. The Rabbinical Assembly expresses its deepest appreciation to its leadership including Rabbis Julie Schonfeld and Joel Meyers and to the leadership of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism including Rabbis Steven Wernick and Jerome Epstein.

### **Resolution on the Presbyterian Church (USA) Middle East Study Committee Report**

Whereas at its upcoming convention in July of 2010, the Middle East Study Committee of the Presbyterian Church will present a report entitled, “Breaking Down the Walls” presenting its findings and perspectives on the Middle East;

Whereas experience in past dialogue with the Presbyterian Church, both on a national and local level, has shown that there are allies among Church leaders who articulate tremendous support for Israel. The Rabbinical Assembly appreciates and takes note of their support;

Whereas the Rabbinical Assembly posits that this report is seriously biased and flawed in that it:

- Makes numerous derogatory references to “the occupation” without recognizing that the areas in dispute were acquired by Israel after the defensive Six Day War and Israel has agreed to give back 97% of that land in the aftermath of the 1999 Camp David Accords;
- Places the blame for Palestinian violence on Israel’s “occupation of Arab lands” without adequately recognizing the role played by Arab incitement in the ongoing conflict; and
- Endorses the Kairos Document, a one-sided perspective that places the full blame for the conflict on Israel and rejects the notion of a two-state solution, while deeming Palestinian violence as “legal resistance”.

Therefore be it resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly call upon the Presbyterian Church to reject this document and to repudiate and disassociate itself from this effort;

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly call upon its members to become familiar with this document and to reach out in dialogue to our Presbyterian colleagues as well as bringing up this issue at meetings of local ministeria and communicate our opposition and concern with this report;

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly reassess its position of continuing common cause with any church body that endorses the Kairos Palestine document; and

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly partner with other Jewish organizations and allies in the Presbyterian Church to advocate for a more balanced approach and to be a visible presence when this issue is considered at the 219th Presbyterian Church General Assembly in July, 2010.

### Resolution on Civil Discourse

Whereas political discourse has become increasingly rancorous and disparaging, replacing reasoned argument with demonizing invective and *ad hominem* attacks;

Whereas public debates too often descend into what novelist Thomas Mann calls, “The politics of accusation and moral annihilation,”;

Whereas Jewish law and ethics have deep-rooted concerns about the power of words to harm. We learn from Proverbs, “Life and death are in the power of the tongue.” We learn from Rabbi Israel Salanter, “Be vigilant in protecting the honor of all people, especially those with whom you disagree.” We learn from countless examples in the Talmud how to conduct vigorous debate without abusive language, thereby exemplifying the principle of *kavod ha-briyot* ;

Whereas John Adams, one of the founders of American democracy and its second president also warned about the necessity of civil discourse: “I fear that in every assembly members will obtain an influence by *noise* rather than *sense*, by *meanness* rather than *greatness*, and by *ignorance* and not *learning*. There is one thing...that must be attempted and most sacredly observed, or we are all undone. There must be decency and respect and veneration introduced for persons of every rank, or we are undone,”;

Whereas the most egregious misuse of language draws on imagery from the Holocaust to demonize political opponents; and

Whereas democracy will fail unless society treats issues and ideas as serious questions that require critical thinking and wide, respectful discussion, not as sticks with which to beat one’s opponent.

Therefore be it resolved that we as rabbis act as models of proper dialogue in all of our communications including our discussions with one another, both in person and electronically;

Be it further resolved that leaders and representatives of the Rabbinical Assembly continue to speak out against demonizing rhetoric (especially Holocaust imagery) and *ad hominem* attacks within the Jewish world, in North America and in Israel, reaffirming our 1994 resolution, “On Civil Discourse and Violence in Communal Jewish Life”;

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly advise our institutions to establish clear norms for discussion, debate and communication;

Be it further resolved that members of the Rabbinical Assembly counsel its constituents to be discriminating consumers of entertainment and information, avoiding angry rhetoric and speaking out against personal attacks; and

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly call upon government and international officials, and members of the media to conduct themselves according to the highest standards of civility in all public discourse.

**Resolution on the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Birth of Theodor Herzl**

Whereas May 2, 2010 marked the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Theodor Herzl, the founder of the modern Zionist movement whose bold and daring vision and inspirational leadership gave impetus to the dream of founding our modern homeland;

Whereas the Rabbinical Assembly has joined the entire Jewish world in the celebration of Theodor Herzl's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday as part of this year's Yom HaAtzmaut celebration;

Whereas members of the Rabbinical Assembly have long prided themselves for their commitment to building the Land of Israel and furthering the Zionist mission; and

Whereas the Zionist dream has produced many stunning accomplishments including the establishment of a democratic and sovereign state in the Middle East, the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language, a flourishing Jewish culture and astounding scientific innovations.

Therefore be it resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly affirm this year of celebration of the dream and vision of Theodor Herzl. The Rabbinical Assembly calls upon the arms of our movement to develop and sponsor educational programs about Herzl's work, his dream, his legacy, and the achievements that have been realized;

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly reaffirm its commitment to the work of Mercaz, and Tenuat Ha-Masortit, the Conservative Movement in Israel, in their efforts to realize Herzl's dream of religious pluralism within Israel's Jewish and democratic society; and

Be it further resolved that the members of the Rabbinical Assembly commit themselves to Herzl's Zionist vision: "Zionism, as I understand it, is not solely about the desire to acquire a legally secure piece of real estate for our downtrodden people, after all, but also about the desire to grow towards moral and spiritual perfection" (Theodore Herzl, "Our Hope, Greetings from a Youth Monthly" (1904); Before Israel and World War II; Herzl's Writings, Vol. VII (Hebrew) 1961, p.285).

### **Resolution on Gilad Shalit**

Whereas Gilad Shalit, the son of Aviva and Noam Shalit, was abducted by Hamas terrorists at Kerem Shalom within Israel's borders as part of an unprovoked attack on Sunday, June 25, 2006 when he was 19 years old and has been held captive now for 1,426 days (as of May 21, 2010);

Whereas he has not seen or spoken with family members during these almost four years;

Whereas Hamas, in violation of international law, has not permitted Pvt. Shalit to be visited by the International Red Cross; and

Whereas the mitzvah of *Pidyon Shvuyim* (The Redemption of Prisoners) is paramount in Jewish tradition.

Therefore be it resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly:

- Call upon the International Red Cross to make every effort to assure the well being of Gilad Shalit and for Hamas to fully cooperate with that effort;
- Call upon its members to demand that their governmental leaders, international agencies, the United Nations and human rights organizations put further pressure on Hamas to secure the release of Gilad Shalit;
- Call upon specifically elected and appointed officials of the United States government especially Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to demand the release of Gilad Shalit from her Palestinian counterparts;
- Call upon the State of Israel to do all that it can to work towards securing the release of Gilad Shalit;
- Call upon religious leaders of all faith traditions to work for the immediate release of Gilad Shalit to his country and to his family; and
- Call upon Jews all over the world to continue to pray on behalf of Gilad ben Aviva v'Noam.

### **Resolution Supporting Israel in the Peace Process**

Whereas the Rabbinical Assembly supports the democratic process and democratically elected governments of the State of Israel;

Whereas the State of Israel has consistently extended its hand in peace to its Arab neighbors and has, over the years, made numerous sacrifices and concessions in the interest and hope of achieving peace with its enemies;

Whereas Israel is a vibrant democracy with a free press and a high level of participation in its electoral process;

Whereas the Rabbinical Assembly affirms the unique ties and relationship that exists between the Jews of the Diaspora and the State of Israel and the recognition that we share a common fate; and

Whereas it is the citizens of Israel who must live with the consequences for its security of agreements made as a result of negotiations.

Therefore be it resolved that as Israel enters into these negotiations, the Rabbinical Assembly pledges its support and recognizes that it may necessitate making difficult decisions and sacrifices;

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly ask the government of Israel to consider the voices of the Jews of the Diaspora and to view the Jews of the Diaspora as partners in the quest for peace and security; and

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly urges the international community to respect the peace agreements negotiated by the democratically elected government of Israel.

## Resolution on Iran

Whereas the Rabbinical Assembly passed resolutions in 2007 and 2008 expressing our concern over the threat of a nuclear armed Iran;

Whereas the regime of Iran has demonstrated anti-Semitism repeatedly, publically and shamelessly and has called for the destruction of the State of Israel;

Whereas Iran funds and provides material support for Hamas, Hezbollah and other terrorist organizations around the world;

Whereas it has taken brutally repressive acts against its own citizens to quell any threats to its hegemony;

Whereas a nuclear equipped Iran would present a threat to the stability and security of not only the entire Middle East, but also of the world; and

Whereas reports indicate that Iran is becoming very close to being a full fledged nuclear power.

Therefore be it resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly reaffirm its 2007 and 2008 resolutions calling on the international community to impose serious sanctions on Iran;

Be it further resolved that the RA and its members urge President Barack Obama to use every effort to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons capability and to utilize the authority of his office to gain support for imposing crippling sanctions now on the terrorist Iranian regime;

Be it further resolved that the RA and its members call upon all nations especially China, France and Russia, the United Nations and international agencies to act forcefully to impose crippling sanctions and to take strong action to prevent Iran from becoming a full fledged nuclear power; and

Be it further resolved that the RA and its members call upon the institutions of the Conservative movement to display the "No Nukes for Iran" Banner \* in a highly visible place to send a powerful message to our communities and beyond.

\*To order a banner go to <http://www.nonukesforiran.org/products/>, use promotional code "uscj-banner".

### **Resolution on Attempts to Delegitimize Israel**

Whereas:

- The land of Israel has been home to the Jewish people for millennia;
- The Jewish people has prayed and worked for a return to their homeland during all their years of exile;
- The Jewish people suffered persecution and genocide while living under the rule of hostile hosts;
- The Jewish people have by legal means including through a United Nations resolution established a state in the Land of Israel;
- Israel grants full civic rights to its minority populations; and
- The IDF has shown great restraint while defending Israel's citizens from attack; and

Whereas Israel is the only full fledged democracy in the Middle East, fulfilling the highest principles of human dignity and civil rights based on the teachings of the Bible and its sacred tradition.

Therefore be it resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly deplore the irrational and brazen anti-Semitic attacks on Israel and its citizens by the global community, its institutions, including governments and the media;

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly condemn boycotts and attacks on Israeli academic faculties, institutions and individual scholars; and

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly:

- Condemn all efforts by other nations and associations to delegitimize the State of Israel as a Jewish State;
- Denounce those who deny Israel the right to defend itself as a sovereign nation;
- Encourage the Palestinian leadership to initiate a program to educate in its schools the next generation of Palestinians to recognize the legitimacy of the State of Israel as a Jewish State and work towards peace between Palestinians and Israelis;
- Call upon all countries and the United Nations to support the State of Israel as it pursues its legitimate national interests, including protecting its population; and
- Call upon its members to contact their government officials, community and religious leaders, encouraging them to reject all efforts to delegitimize Israel as the Jewish State.

### **Resolution on Religious Pluralism in Israel**

Whereas the Talmud states in discussing the merits of the opposing legal opinions of Rabbis Hillel and Shammai, (Eruvin 13b) “*eilu ve-eilu divrei Elohim chayim* – these and these are the words of the living God”;

Whereas Conservative/Masorti rabbis worldwide, especially those in Israel, have worked tirelessly for decades with the Israeli Government, the World Zionist Organization, The Jewish Agency, the Chief Rabbinate and local governments to contribute to the building of the Jewish National homeland;

Whereas young Israelis need an array of attractive religious Jewish options which are in harmony with the reality of their lives. The Masorti Movement provides not only places of prayer, but serves as kehillot, community centers offering adult Jewish learning/batei midrash, youth movements such as NOAM, preschools/gannim, social service and friendship networks such as MAROM. The Conservative/Masorti Movement makes a positive contribution to the religious identity of Israeli Jews and the State of Israel;

Whereas a strong relationship between Israeli and Diaspora Jews is crucial to the long term security of Israel. The Diaspora community has become progressively more marginalized on issues of religious status and identity over the past two decades;

Whereas MK Livni recently, in addressing 120 Rabbinical Assembly members, indicated her concern at the weakening of Jewish identity, history and culture in the hearts of Israeli youth, as well as her awareness of the detrimental nature of haredi coercion in the religious policies of Israel; and

Whereas the monopoly of the ultra-Orthodox in religious matters in Israel is unacceptable.

Therefore be resolved that the RA support and strengthen the newly established Knesset lobby for religious pluralism and partner with all those individuals, organizations, and institutions devoted to resolving issues of pluralism and to bring about the equal distribution of state resources and that no further legislation be brought forth in the כנסת that would further entrench the haredization in Israel; and

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly in concert with its 2009 Resolution on the Dissolution of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel call on the Government of Israel to extend to the members of the Rabbinical Assembly equal status to officiate at life cycle functions including weddings and conversions.