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*Meeting  
Our Obligations to  
Our Community  
and the World*  
תקון עולם TIKKUN OLAM

RESOLUTIONS

ADOPTED BY THE

ORTHODOX UNION'S

88TH ANNIVERSARY NATIONAL CONVENTION

MARCEL WEBER, CHAIRMAN, RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE

NOVEMBER 1986

MAR HESHVAN 5747

### By way of introduction

In the four decades since tragedy destroyed European Jewry, the North American Orthodox Jewish community has matured into the Diaspora's preeminent Torah force. Indigenous rabbinic and lay leadership of high quality have come to the fore, while yeshivot, kolelim and other centers of authentic Torah education are to be found throughout the continent.

Much of the Orthodox community's strength lies in the rich flavor of its diverse components. Unlike other segments of the Jewish community, Orthodoxy is not a monolithic expression. We are not limited to one single yeshiva, a single rabbinic organization, or one single voice on the great issues confronting society. The multifaceted nature of our community has produced a flourishing, vibrant Orthodoxy which can look with satisfaction upon the accomplishments of a large range of organizations, institutions and individuals whose common denominator is unwavering loyalty to authentic Torah principles.

It is precisely this level of accomplishment that has led to tension in our relationship with the non-Orthodox Jewish world. An "anachronistic" dying Orthodoxy was not perceived as a competitor, much less a threat. A dynamic Orthodoxy has the added responsibility of reaching out to those who are not yet observant in a fashion that inspires without offending -- while avoiding the error of arrogance. We are not surprised that Torah Jewry has flourished - our Torah and Tradition has promised us nothing less.

At the same time we are deeply saddened by the irresponsible behavior of those who act in a fashion that desecrates the name of Heaven. Acts of violence and of extremism have no place in the Jewish community. The recent outbreak of such acts in Israel has caused great anguish to all of us who cherish a Torah, "all of whose paths are peace". Such extremist acts cause needless hatred and pose at least as great a threat to Jewish survival and Jewish continuity as the behavior they purport to be answering.

The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations in Convention assembled is proud of the accomplishments of its synagogues, affiliates, and its relationship with the Rabbinical Council of America. We have spoken out forcefully on the issues that we feel must be addressed by our community. We do so, nevertheless, mindful of the existence of honest disagreements within the Torah community and even within our member synagogues on some of these questions. May the Almighty grant that differences that are rooted in Torah conviction be deemed worthy of being categorized as "Elu V'elu Divrei Elokim Chayim".

## I. ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

Jewish tradition teaches that G-d deliberately created an unfinished world and left the task of completion to humankind. At Sinai the Jewish people accepted a special responsibility to carry forward with the work of creation - to become a mamlechet kohanim v'goy kadosh - a nation set aside in its devotion to Torah values and Torah living.

The Torah commands the Jew to be involved in every aspect of the struggle for Tikun Olam, completing and improving society, - to apply the Torah's standards of justice and morality to every human situation. We are saddened and dismayed by those who label certain social or communal issues as "of no concern to Jews." To Jews, injustice, human suffering, disease and hunger anywhere on earth is of profound concern. The debasement of any human being is a desecration of the Creator in whose image we are all formed.

WE THEREFORE RESOLVE THAT:

-The Orthodox Union will continue to speak out forcefully for social justice wherever, whenever, and to whomever it is denied.

-We will continue to work with the Torah sages who are the guardians of genuine social justice - to prepare and disseminate information stressing the Jewish points of view - on issues of contemporary social concern.

-Orthodox Union representatives in all multi-organizational bodies should clearly delineate our position against world hunger, racism and discrimination, and in favor of easing the anguish of poverty and enhancing the protection of our fragile human environment.

-The Orthodox Union and its constituents support the continued efforts to ensure against the politicization of American and United Nations relief programs and work for a generous expansion of American food aid and similar humanitarian programs.

-Member congregations are called upon to urge their members to become involved in the political process. Only by our participation in this process can we ensure that the Torah's standards of justice and morality will become the guides for those whose decisions shape public policy.

-Yeshivot and Day Schools are strongly urged to stress the universal aspects of the Torah's concern for human justice and morality. We call upon other Orthodox organizations to join us in publicizing the necessity for Orthodox Jews to be sensitive to all aspects of human suffering.

-Our congregations and members are urged to support those groups that seek to rally Jewish support for those that are in need and to provide facilities, where appropriate, to feed the hungry and provide shelter to the homeless.

-The Orthodox Union pledges to combat racism and anti-Semitism wherever they manifest themselves in society. Our affiliates are urged to cooperate with all appropriate agencies and organizations, Jewish and non-Jewish, in helping to root out those who preach or practice intolerance and hatred - be it the mindless anti-Semitism of Lyndon LaRouche or the Jew-baiting racism of Louis Farrakhan.

## II. CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL PROBLEMS

A. The Jewish community, and even the Orthodox Jewish community, is not immune to the social ills that tear at the fabric of contemporary American life. The growth of the drug culture, the pervasive glorification of pornography and violence, and the presentation of adultery, promiscuity and homosexuality as "alternative life styles" are deeply painful to us as Orthodox Jews and as sensitive Americans. We are fully cognizant of the importance of defending individual liberties, but yet are convinced that there are powerful positive steps that can and must be taken to protect society from these evils.

WE THEREFORE RESOLVE THAT:

-The Orthodox Union strongly endorses responsible efforts to combat the spread of drugs and alcohol through cooperation on every governmental level, increased drug awareness education in the schools, stiff prison sentences for those who traffic in addictive poisons, and meaningful substance rehabilitation programs.

-The Orthodox Union shares the revulsion of millions of Americans at the glorification of drugs, violence and pornography in the mass media. We call upon the leaders of the media everywhere to undertake vigorous efforts to improve their current all too sorry record in this regard. We also support responsible community-wide efforts that seek, through moral persuasion, to convince merchants and theatre owners to respect standards of communal decency.

-Torah Judaism does not consider sexual morality to be negotiable or subject to capricious social whims. Our opposition to sexual deviance and exploitation do not merely stem from reactions to the current socio-cultural excesses but from a profound commitment to a 3,500 year old tradition.

B. The Jewish tradition is a caring one. From time immemorial the Jewish community has cared for the aged, the homeless, and the sick through numerous institutions and individual efforts. While applauding the work that has been done, we note there is more yet to do.

The Orthodox Union calls on its member synagogues to undertake programs directed towards the aged. Synagogue members could be asked to select a particular individual or couple who they should befriend and assist. Instructional programs could be instituted, both Torah-oriented and secularly-oriented, such as in the fields of nutrition or health care.

Recognizing the serious national problem of the homeless, the Orthodox Union calls on all Jewish institutions with suitable facilities to open their doors to the homeless and provide them with shelter. We call on the government, on all levels, to direct greater attention and resources to this urgent problem.

There are Jews who, on occasion, may have special needs for shelter. Be it the traveller, or someone wanting to be close to an ailing person, or the victim of abuse at home, the Torah community has an obligation to see to their needs. We salute the institutions that are doing outstanding work in these areas and call on our member congregations to support this work.

Orthodox congregations, institutions, and individuals are called upon to show proper concern and understanding for the terminally ill. This burden falls most heavily on those volunteers and professionals who work with the sick and the bereaved. AIDS has struck a particular terror in many hearts due to the unanswered questions surrounding its origins and transmission, and particularly because of the absence of any treatment or cure. We call on governmental and private health agencies to increase funding and research to combat cancer, AIDS, and other diseases for which there is no cure. We call on the Orthodox community to explore the hospice approach to the care of the terminally ill.

### III. ISRAEL: THE JEWISH HOMELAND

#### A. Israel Among the Nations

We affirm our abiding commitment to the State of Israel and to the promise of peace for which Israel has sacrificed so very much.

American Jews are profoundly thankful for the historic support which the United States has provided Israel during the past four decades. We are particularly pleased at the current warm state of American-Israeli relations and are confident that the bipartisan support for friendly and cooperative relations will continue to flourish. Israel has demonstrated that it is America's most loyal and dependable friend in the Middle East. At the same time, Israel has, despite the trauma of five wars and constant siege, remained a staunch democracy. There have been only eleven free elections in the entire history of the Middle East, and all eleven have been held in Israel.

## B. Economic Situation

Israel has weathered the direst economic crisis since the earliest years of statehood, although the tourism industry continues to suffer. We commit ourselves to working for appropriate increased levels of American aid and investment on both a governmental and communal level. Our community can and must do more to help Israel during these trying times. It is inappropriate that all too many Jews spend substantial sums on vacations in countries with anti-Israel foreign policies while Israel could benefit from their currency and their presence.

## C. Mid-East Negotiations

In President Reagan's last two years in office, we can expect further American efforts to reactivate the stalled peace process. We welcome this desire to move the parties back to the negotiating table, and to emphasize the importance of this process to both Israel and the Arab nations. We remind the President that the heart of the problem is the Arab refusal to unambiguously recognize Israel's existence and legitimacy -- and to negotiate in good faith.

We are grateful that the President has underscored the primary importance of the Camp David accords but remain concerned that American proposals may predetermine the outcome of negotiations and in reality subvert the Camp David process, which permitted the parties to forestall resolution of difficult issues and work out differences during the interim period. We remain firmly opposed to the creation of a Palestinian state, and we are confident that the legitimate needs of all residents of Judea and Samaria will be considered during the autonomy negotiations. We reiterate our long standing position that Jews have a historic right to live throughout the historic borders of Eretz Yisrael, regardless of the ultimate political formula adopted for these territories.

## D. Jerusalem

We strongly reiterate the Orthodox Union's support for the transfer of the American Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Jerusalem is Israel's spiritual and political capital. The illegal Jordanian occupation of the Old City of Jerusalem in 1948 resulted in the expulsion of all Jewish inhabitants and the desecration of the Jewish quarter, synagogues, yeshivot and cemeteries. Today, Jerusalem flourishes as a united city where the rights of all religions are scrupulously safeguarded. The United States and Canadian governments must finally recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

## E. Palestinian Refugees

Any thoughtful discussion of the Middle East problem must make

mention of the Palestinian refugees. The Arab regimes must be condemned for their callous manipulation of these people's suffering. Rather than offering them homes, the Arab governments have brutally used the refugees as pawns and cannon fodder in their drive to eliminate Israel. The unfortunate circumstances in which these refugees find themselves are an appropriate concern for people of conscience everywhere.

Israel has shown more creativity and compassion in dealing with the Palestinians within its borders than the Arab regimes have in treating Palestinians within theirs. The overwhelming majority of the Arab and Druze citizens of Israel have, through their example, refuted the Palestinian contention that Arabs cannot thrive as citizens of the Jewish State.

We support Israel's refusal to recognize the terrorist P.L.O. murderers as legitimate spokesmen for the Palestinian people. We call upon the United States government to continue in its proper refusal to deal with the P.L.O. on any and all levels.

#### F. Political Action

Member synagogues are urged to develop stronger local advocacy programs on Israel's behalf. Congregations are encouraged to develop relationships with their local congressmen and senators, and to form and participate in political action committees in support of candidates who support Israel. We look forward to the continuation and intensification of the Union's program of Missions to Washington and the continued relationship with as many members of Congress as possible. We urge all congregations to designate a liaison to the Union's Institute for Public Affairs so that they can participate in our collective efforts.

Both the Orthodox Union and its constituency shall cooperate in pro-Israel coalitions with non-Jewish groups when it is determined that membership in these coalitions is appropriate.

#### G. Homeland and Refuge

Since the expulsion of the Jewish people from their homeland in the wake of the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E., the restoration of the Jewish autonomy and the return to Eretz Yisrael has remained the dream of all Jews. In our prayers we turn towards Jerusalem and pray that it will be rebuilt to its previous splendor. Our seasons and holidays revolve around those of Eretz Yisrael, not those of our adopted countries.

Since the beginning of the modern yishuv in the last years of the 19th century, and particularly after the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, the prospect of aliyah has become a practical reality. Tens of thousands of Americans have joined hands with their brothers from all corners of the Diaspora to make the desert bloom. Israel has become a refuge for all persecuted Jews, a haven for these unwanted and discriminated against in the



lands of their birth, and an attraction to those who dream of building a Torah society.

As Orthodox Jews, we have a special obligation to consider aliyah. Indeed, statistics show that the bulk of North American aliyah comes from the ranks of the observant Jews.

Accordingly, we applaud the outstanding achievements of the Orthodox Union/NCSY Israel Center in Jerusalem, which has done so much to help North American Olim adjust to life in their new homeland.

We note with pleasure that El Al has become a fully shomer Shabbos airline and look for similar creative steps by the government of Israel to reflect the Torah-rooted foundations of our people.

WE THEREFORE RESOLVE THAT:

- The Orthodox Union, under the leadership of its Israel Commission, shall promote and encourage aliyah and positive Israel experiences among all its members through its Aliyah Department. This will include both educational programs within the synagogues and the encouragement of summer trips and study programs in Israel.

- Member synagogues are encouraged to promote aliyah as a viable alternative through education, visits to Israel, and programs developed by the Aliyah Department. Synagogues should establish a scholarship fund for students wishing to participate in the NCSY Israel Summer seminar or wishing to study in Israel for a year or more.

#### H. DARCHEI SHALOM: DOMESTIC TRANQUILITY

We remain deeply distressed by the tensions which threaten to divide Israeli society into permanently warring camps.

We call upon all elements in Israeli society to work together to resolve disputes in a civilized, tolerant, and peaceful fashion. Issues that impact on personal and religious status must continue to be left to religious courts to adjudicate. Resolution of such issues by civil authorities will ultimately divide Israel and world Jewry with devastating consequences.

Tragically, this process of division has already begun. Support for Israel once united almost all Jews. Today, issues that divide Israeli society threaten even more profoundly to divide North American Jewry. The Orthodox Union is deeply alarmed by the growing propensity of certain North American Jewish groups to utilize political and financial pressure to foist their views on the people and State of Israel. We pledge to combat all such efforts. We, accordingly, strongly deplore the decision of an American Jewish group to bar Israeli Knesset members from their forums on the basis of their vote on the "Giyur k'Halacha" issue.

We similarly deplore the growing tendency of umbrella organizations to become involved in internal Israeli political and religious disputes.

**WE THEREFORE RESOLVE THAT:**

The Orthodox Union and its member synagogues are to be vigilant against the involvement of local and national Jewish Community Councils, Federations, and defense agencies in internal Israeli political and religious disputes. The Communal Relations Commission is mandated to monitor such developments in all "umbrella organizations and, when appropriate, to report to the Officers and Board of the Orthodox Union on this problem.

#### IV. BELEAGURED JEWISH COMMUNITIES

The paradox of anti-Semitism continues. While anti-Semitism has become socially and politically unacceptable in most of the West, it is still fostered and exploited by Communist and Arab governments, and by international terrorists.

Whether it is printed propaganda in the Soviet Union, posters in Paraguay, or the murder of innocent worshippers in Turkey, anti-Semitism anywhere touches every Jew everywhere.

The Orthodox Union is mandated to speak out and take action, in cooperation with other bodies, against anti-Semitism wherever it may surface. We call on the government of the United States to be vigilant against the appearance of anti-Semitism here and abroad. The treatment of local Jewish communities must be taken into account in all U.S. relations with foreign countries and in the consideration of all trade and military agreements.

##### A. Jews in the Soviet Union

The Jewish population of the Soviet Union, nearly two million strong, represents more than one sixth of the world's Jewish community. These Jews are effectively trapped in the Soviet Union, although some three hundred thousand have expressed a desire to emigrate to the Jewish homeland.

However, Jewish emigration has been virtually halted. The annual total for 1986 is expected to reflect a 98% drop in emigration permits since 1980. Soviet Jews are denied the opportunity to live as Jews, to learn about their religious traditions, culture, and heritage. The training of rabbis and other Jewish functionaries, the printing of Hebrew books and the teaching of Hebrew are prohibited by Soviet law. Jews who have attempted to learn about and practice Judaism are subjected to a pattern of harassment and intimidation by Soviet authorities. There have been frightening reports of the arrest of Jews whose only crime has been the possession of religious articles such as t'fillin, a chumash or a mezuzah, on the false and contrived ground that "it is well known that Jews use drugs in their religious observances."

The Orthodox community has long demonstrated its concern for Jews trapped behind the Iron Curtain. The Orthodox Union and its affiliates have joined with the coordinating bodies for Soviet Jewry activity to bring the plight of Soviet Jews to the attention of the United States Government, to bring pressure upon the Soviet Union to permit their emigration, and to boost the morale of Soviet Jews themselves. However, the crisis has not been more acute since the birth of the Soviet Jewry movement, and we call upon Jews to redouble their efforts in this area.

WE THEREFORE RESOLVE THAT:

-The Soviet Jewry Commission will promote the cause of Jews in the Soviet Union to member congregations. It will also endeavor through various means to directly assist the efforts of Soviet Jews to maintain and increase the level of their religious education and observance.

-We are heartened by the fact that Natan Shcharansky and Eliyahu Essas, among other valiant Soviet Jews, were released this past year from the Soviet Union and are living freely in Israel. However, we cannot lose sight of the fact that thousands of others remain confined in a country which does not accept their right to practice their religion as they see fit, including many (such as Iosif Begun and Leonid Volvovsky) who are being brutally incarcerated and punished for the "crimes" of clinging to and expressing their beliefs. We demand that the Soviet Union release all Prisoners of Zion and all others who seek to emigrate to their homeland, Israel.

-The Orthodox Union reaffirms its support for the Jackson-Vanik amendment and calls on all those doing business with the Soviet Union to utilize their activities as opportunities to forcefully raise the issue of Soviet Jewry.

-The Orthodox Union and its members will communicate their concern to members of Congress and other elected and appointed officials. Copies of correspondence and memoranda of phone conversations should be forwarded to the Soviet Jewry Commission.

-Member congregations are urged to work closely with local Soviet Jewry coalitions in their communities to ensure that the united voice of American Jewry in support of Soviet Jews is heard in the halls of Congress, the White House, the United Nations, the Kremlin, and in the homes of Soviet Jews themselves. Congregational participation is also important to ensure that programs and demonstrations do not desecrate the sanctity of Shabbat and holidays and that religious symbols are never used inappropriately.

-Member synagogues are urged to adopt Soviet families, provide support through letters and packages, and to institute Bar Mitzvah twinning programs. This will enable American children to share Shabbatot, chagim, and other meaningful occasions with their counterparts in the Soviet Union whose families are not free to celebrate these milestones themselves.

## B. Jews in Syria

The 4500 remaining Jews in Syria continue to suffer active and systematic repression while being refused permission to leave the country, a blatant violation of international law and fundamental human morality.

Syrian Jews live in constant terror. They are denied the right to travel within their own country, forced to live in woeful ghettos, and excluded from most skilled occupations. They can be arrested and imprisoned without a trial and are subjected to physical torture and spiritual genocide. Syrian authorities have turned a deaf ear to appeals by major international and humanitarian organizations.

WE THEREFORE RESOLVE THAT:

- The Orthodox Union, through its Communal Relations Commission, shall continue to remind our government of the plight of Syrian Jews and urge them to act on their behalf.

- Member congregations are urged to communicate their concerns to members of Congress. Copies of all correspondence and memoranda detailing phone conversations should be sent to the Communal Relations Commission.

- NCSY should include Syrian Jewry in all its social action programs.

## C. Ethiopian Jewry

The Orthodox Union applauds the government of Israel for its role in the rescue of thousands of our brethren from Ethiopia. We applaud as well the government of the United States for its critical role in these operations and for its efforts on behalf of beleaguered Jewish communities everywhere. Much remains to be done. The plight of the Beta Yisrael still languishing in Ethiopia and in the Sudan is of profound concern to us. Those of the Beta Yisrael who have made it to Israel must be integrated into Israeli society without the tragedies that accompanied the absorption process of other refugee immigrant groups in the past.

WE THEREFORE RESOLVE THAT:

- The Orthodox Union and its member synagogues will continue to work for the reunification of Ethiopian Jewry with their brothers and sisters in Israel.

- The Orthodox Union and its member synagogues will continue to monitor the absorption process of Ethiopian Jews in Israel so as to ensure the opportunity for them to lead a full religious life.

#### D. Iranian Jewry

After years of fundamentalist rule, our concern for the tens of thousands of Jews trapped in Iran has not diminished. They live as captives, unable to leave and subject to discrimination in social and economic life. Families are not permitted to emigrate, and frequently the parents of students living abroad are held hostage to ensure the return of their children.

We are happy to note that tens of thousands of Jews have succeeded in emigrating from Iran in past years. More than 25,000 Iranian Jews have chosen to live in the United States, posing new challenges for the American Jewish community. Iranian Jews do not always adjust to the largely Ashkenazic infrastructure. Young Iranians must be acclimated into our yeshivot and day schools, but steps must be taken to ensure that the unique culture and minhagim of Iranian Jewry are not lost in the transition.

#### WE THEREFORE RESOLVE THAT:

Synagogues, day schools, yeshivot, and NCSY shall intensify their ongoing programs and activities to bring the Iranian Jews living in their midst into the Jewish community. Special efforts should be made to understand their culture and heritage and accommodate their special needs.

#### V. Public Policy

##### A. Terrorism

The scourge of international terrorism continues to plague world Jewry and the entire civilized world. Hardly a day goes by without another headline on an incident in the Middle East, Europe, Asia, or the Americas.

Terrorism is not the continuation of politics or war by other means. Rather it is the worst form of violent crime directed against innocent men, women and children. As we recently saw once again, in the slaughter of worshippers at the Neve Shalom synagogue in Istanbul, its victims are selected on the basis of blind hatred and anti-Semitism. Terrorism must have no place in the civilized world. Its "safe havens" must be destroyed and it must be uprooted at the source. The Orthodox Union applauds the U.S. and Great Britain for the significant steps they have taken to expose and combat Libyan and Syrian sponsored terrorism and calls on all nations of the world to join together in the struggle against terrorism by emulating these steps and by devoting more resources and attention to security needs, and by uniting in economic sanctions and military action when necessary.

The United States has a special role to play. The Union congratulated President Ronald Reagan earlier this year after the air strikes against Libya. We support the efforts of the United States to aggressively defend the free world against international terrorism.

## B. South Africa

Racial discrimination is anathema to the Jewish tradition. To differentiate between people on the basis of race or color is contrary to the letter and spirit of prophetic and rabbinic teachings which stress that all human beings are created in the "Image of the Creator". As Jews we are particularly sensitive to the tragic consequences of racial and religious prejudice and are committed to speak out against such practices wherever they appear, whether it be against the Bahai in Iran or our fellow Jews in the Soviet Union or Syria.

The Orthodox Union remains sensitive to the interests of our Jewish brethren living in South Africa. We note the courageous statements made by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies rejecting apartheid and renewing its commitment to justice, equal opportunity and the removal of all provisions in the laws of South Africa which discriminate on the grounds of color or race.

The Orthodox community stands with those millions of other North Americans who, individually and through the private sector and government, protest the policies of apartheid in the Republic of South Africa. The "Sullivan Principles" have become a standard guiding many institutions that are contemplating divestment of holdings in American corporations doing business in South Africa. These principles call on corporations to voluntarily comply with specified standards regarding equal and fair employment practices, training programs to prepare Blacks and other non-whites for supervisory and administrative positions, programs to promote more Blacks and non-whites in those jobs and efforts to promote a higher quality of life outside the white environment. We urge all Jewish institutions, our member congregations and their congregants to divest from their portfolios all investments in companies that do business in South Africa and do not comply with the "Sullivan Principles".

We urge our government to take bold measures to help bring an end to the reign of apartheid in South Africa. The Communal Relations Commission is mandated to work with responsible opponents of apartheid toward this goal.



### C. Nuclear War and Disarmament

The development of nuclear weapons, and the willingness of governments to use them as a threat against other nations has changed the face of warfare. The moral questions we face when contemplating armed conflict are multiplied as we consider the consequences of a nuclear explosion. While conventional warfare is focused on an armed enemy, the strategy of nuclear deterrence demands that long and mid range weaponry be directed towards heavily populated civilian centers.

The Torah offers us a choice between life and death, but commands us U'Vacharta B'Chaim, to choose life. The specter of total destruction which now hangs over our heads must provide the impetus for all countries to search for alternatives to armed confrontation as a means for resolving conflicts among nations. Every congregation must educate itself on the possibility of nuclear war and urge our government to press forward even more vigorously in the movement to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

WE THEREFORE RESOLVE THAT:

-The Orthodox Union, through the Communal Relations Commission, shall communicate its concern to the government of the United States and urge the Administration to move quickly towards the ratification of a nuclear arms treaty. Further, the Orthodox Union is authorized to testify in favor of such ratification whenever appropriate.

-The Orthodox Union calls upon the United States government to maintain a strong but cost effective defense without which we cannot maintain a strong and effective strategic relationship with Israel and our allies around the world. We call upon the Soviet Union to show its commitment towards lessening of world tension by withdrawing from Afghanistan and joining in negotiations with the U.S. towards conventional arms reduction in order to proceed to mutual nuclear disarmament without endangering the security of the free world.

-Synagogues and their constituencies are urged to begin to study the implications of nuclear war and educate themselves and their communities to the dangers of nuclear conflict. Rabbis are urged to devote sermons and shiurim to this issue and encourage their membership to learn more about the possibilities for peace as well as the potential for nuclear war in our lifetime.

### D. Energy

Our economy and our culture are so energy-intensive that any alteration in the availability or cost of energy affects every aspect of our national life-employment, education, housing, transportation, food and recreation.



Our diminished, but still substantial dependence on imported petroleum, and the almost total dependence of many industrialized and developing countries - including our close allies - on such sources, tends to affect the flexibility and scope of our government's international relations. The ability of our government to formulate and conduct foreign policy without fear of energy considerations must be a fundamental objective. The recent abundance of oil at relatively lower prices has made the energy issue less prominent among America's concerns. We feel that it is only a matter of time before the next effort by the OPEC cartel to limit production and drive oil prices up.

The Orthodox Union supports policies to lessen American energy dependence, particularly on Persian Gulf oil. We call for conservation efforts and the search for alternative sources of energy, which will greatly advance energy independence for the United States. We support as well the filling of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and the expansion of storage facilities, as protection against price swings in the oil market.

#### E. Human Dignity and Labor

Jewish law commands us to uphold the dignity of all workers, regardless of their station or task. Relations between employer and employee are spelled out explicitly in the Torah.

The United States and Canada have been among the most progressive nations in promoting the rights of working men and women to work under conditions of safety, security, and dignity. The lowering of these standards in any industry or trade is a source of deep concern and outrage to us.

Agricultural workers, many of whom are migrants, remain among the most wretched segments of our society, victims of scandalous living conditions and wages. They are routinely denied health care and education for their children, ensuring that they will remain on the bottom rung of our society. Migrant workers are regularly deported back to their countries of origin and deprived of the opportunity to better themselves while their employers benefit from their inexpensive labor.

Miners often work - and sometimes die - under appalling safety conditions. Many more have died an early death from respiratory illness, particularly "black lung" disease, induced by coal dust.

Modern technology has brought with it new problems for laborers along with benefits for all Americans. Workers in chemical factories may be exposed to dangerous chemicals or radiation, the effects of which are not recognized or diagnosed for many years. Recent class action suits brought by the victims of serious work related disorders point up the need for scrupulous research into occupational hazards.

As the need has arisen, workers have organized themselves to protect the dignity of human beings from exploitation. The Orthodox Union is proud to have been one of the first national religious bodies to have supported the United Farm Workers in their efforts to organize the vineyards and produce fields of California. Similar efforts are underway in other areas of the country where migrant laborers are found.

**WE THEREFORE RESOLVE THAT:**

-The Orthodox Union and its member congregations reaffirm their support for the United Farm Workers in their struggle to bring justice to all agricultural laborers.

-The Orthodox Union and its constituents shall speak out vigorously whenever human dignity is compromised by unsafe working conditions.

**F. Nazi War Criminals and Holocaust Education**

The continued presence of Nazi war criminals on American soil is a stain on our national honor. These war criminals must be made to stand trial in those countries where prosecution for war crimes is feasible. The provisions of the United States legal system, including the "watch list," must be fully employed to prevent anyone suspected of war crimes from entering the United States.

The Orthodox Union applauds the Office of Special Investigations of the United States Department of Justice and calls upon all member synagogues to help OSI in its searches for eyewitnesses to war crimes and to counter the efforts of certain ethnic groups who seek to curtail its work.

The world is awaiting two major trials of accused Nazi war criminals, those of Klaus Barbie in France and Ivan Demjanjuk in Israel. We must not forget that there is a third person, of even greater contemporary significance, who has been accused of war crimes but has not given an account of his actions. That person is Kurt Waldheim. We call on the Attorney General to place Mr. Waldheim's name on the "watch list" without any further delay so as to bar him from entering the United States.

Bringing war criminals to trial is not only a matter of justice, it is one of the most important methods of educating the public about the Holocaust and ensuring that it will never happen again. Education is critical as the Holocaust is being increasingly trivialized in popular culture and rhetoric. We must always remember and remind that the Holocaust was a unique tragedy that befell the Jewish people. It is a particular event with universal implications.

The Orthodox Union views with deep anguish the establishment of the

Carmelite convent at Auschwitz and the erection of a Roman Catholic church at the Sobibor death camp. These are places made holy to the Jewish people by the blood of millions of Jewish men, women and children. Recognizing the fact that millions of Polish Roman Catholics lost their lives in the extermination camps, the Orthodox Union believes that no one group or faith should establish itself on the grounds of concentration camps. However well-intentioned, such places of worship create profound anguish, misunderstanding and resentment among Jews everywhere.

#### G. Bicentennial of the United States Constitution

The Constitution of the United States is the document that has set forth the guidelines for the system of government in which more than in any other in the history of the Diaspora, Jews have been able to live in security and equality. Those principles of basic human rights and freedoms and those structures of democratic government which our ancestors could never have imagined would be given to Jews are our inalienable rights as United States citizens, thanks to the Constitution.

As the United States prepares to celebrate the bicentennial of the Constitution in 1987, the Orthodox Union joins in honoring the document and the principles it embodies. We call on all member congregations to participate in appropriate celebrations and events marking this bicentennial.

#### H. Rights of Sabbath Observers

One of the pillars of our democracy is the right of every citizen to earn a livelihood free from discrimination and to fully participate in American political life. A substantial segment of our citizenry, however, has still not been accorded equal opportunity in these areas upon which our social and economic system is ostensibly based.

Initial steps have been taken to protect the employment rights of Sabbath Observing Jews. Federal and state laws provide for accommodation of religious practices on the job. The Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and a number of state human rights agencies have promulgated regulations dealing with this problem. Determined efforts are still needed to ensure vigorous enforcement of these measures as well as their adoption in jurisdiction in which they have not already been adopted. A determined effort is also necessary to facilitate access to the political process regardless of religious practices.

WE THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT:

The Orthodox Union commits itself to be in the vanguard of an ongoing effort to secure legislation and regulations that would accord to Orthodox Jews the right of public and private employment and political involvement free from discrimination. We note the pioneer work in this area of the National Jewish Commission on Law and Public Affairs (COLPA). We call upon our appropriate Commissions to join with COLPA in drafting these measures.

VI. ON RELIGION AND STATE

As Jews we are acutely aware of what happens to societies in which a religious majority is free to impose its will. We are deeply concerned by any effort to tamper with the traditional relationship between "Church" and "State" in American society. At the same time we remain convinced that every governmental involvement with religion is not ipso facto harmful or constitutional and that reasonable accommodation of religion as well as tolerance of religious belief is an aspect of freedom of religion.

We accordingly support public funding of military and prison chaplains and legislation recognizing and permitting the wearing of yarmulkes by military personnel while remaining unalterably opposed to governmental sanction of support of any particular religious group. We similarly support tuition tax credits and similar programs for parents for non-public school students while objecting to direct governmental funding of religious instruction. Be it thereby resolved that the Orthodox Union reiterates its opposition to prayer, vocal or silent, in North American public schools. Anyone who wishes to say a private prayer anywhere in the United States has ample safeguards to do so. We reject the premise that these can be "voluntary" public school prayer that will not subject a child of a minority faith to ridicule or pressure. We are similarly opposed to the recent ill-advised equal access legislation that allows missionary groups and cults to proselytize in American public schools and to the placing, with public funds, of sectarian religious symbols in public places. The Communal Relations Commission is mandated to continue to publicize the Orthodox Union's views on these issues and to join the overall Jewish community in appropriate legal steps to stop such practices while working with COLPA and other Orthodox groups to ensure that our yeshivot are not penalized by specious church-state arguments.

## VII. FAMILY, SYNAGOGUE AND COMMUNITY

### A. Resolution on the Jewish Family

Unfortunately, the Jewish family is not immune to problems which are faced generally in American society, including cultism, alcoholism, drugs, physical abuse, and the aftermath of divorce.

Material success also takes a toll. The responsible jobs which our young people often attain often lead to the creation of single lifestyles, delayed marriages, smaller families, and children who receive insufficient attention from their parents.

We must also consider the needs of those among us who are unable to care for themselves and who cannot be cared for by their families. Our aged, and those who are physically, mentally or emotionally handicapped require special attention and care. Jewish sponsored institutions need Orthodox participation so they can deal sensitively with halachic concerns.

Orthodox society must mobilize its members to deal with these problems.

WE THEREFORE RESOLVE THAT:

-Rabbis of member congregations are urged to take the lead in dealing with these issues. We call upon the Rabbinical Council of America to provide training to communal rabbis in these areas of concern, to develop and publish standards in halachah for the guidance and welfare of the community, to encourage the members of the community to seek and obtain the best possible rabbinic and social guidance and to cooperate with other rabbis, scholars and community leaders for these purposes.

-Congregation members are strongly urged to reach out to single parents, to invite them into their homes, to make them feel welcome in synagogue life, and to assist them in educating their children as Orthodox Jews. Members are also encouraged to volunteer their time and talents to, and serve on the boards of, Jewish social service and mental health organizations in their communities.

### B. The Orthodox Woman in Contemporary Society

The Torah and Jewish history offer us many examples of outstanding Jewish women. As wives and mothers, Orthodox women have shaped the destiny of our people and have sustained the family and the communal fabric. As community leaders, they have supported and maintained educational, religious and philanthropic institutions.

The Orthodox Union encourages women to devote their talents to activities within the Orthodox community. Participation and leadership in communal affairs is essential to the dynamic growth of the community.

WE THEREFORE RESOLVE THAT:

-Rabbis and congregations seek to increase the participation of women in Torah study programs by ensuring that educational programs for women, particularly in the high school and post high school levels, are given greater financial priority.

-The Orthodox Union reaffirms its support for equal opportunity, recompense and recognition for all women in contemporary society. The Orthodox Union pledges to join all responsible efforts to fight discrimination and prejudice against women, and will work for the passage of local, state, and federal legislation along these lines. Such legislation must, of course, be consistent with First Amendment guarantees of religious freedom.

C. Torah Study

Torah study is not the province of the young alone. All of us must be actively involved in the study of Torah and the application of its precepts. The synagogue must be a center of learning for Jews of all ages. We note the expanding adult education programs in many congregations and applaud the development of new and existing classes in all facets of Jewish life. The Union's Adult Education Program, established in cooperation with the Rabbinical Council of America, facilitates the study of Torah on all levels and sets national standards for achievement. We urge all synagogues to avail themselves of this service.

We must also ensure that the systematic study of Torah extends beyond the boundaries of our congregations. The Orthodox Union's Luach Limud combines a daily calendar with Mishnah and explanations to assist laypersons in the study of Torah. The worldwide "Mishnah Yomit" program and the "Daf Yomi" have become standards for scholars and laypersons alike. These programs should be encouraged at every opportunity.

Synagogue retreats have grown to eagerly anticipated annual events in many congregations. They bring together talented rabbis and scholars and lay people in informal settings specifically for the purpose of Jewish education. Retreats are also organized in various regions of the Orthodox Union, and we urge congregations and regions alike to include them in their ongoing programs.

WE THEREFORE RESOLVE THAT:

-The Orthodox Union shall continue to provide study materials, administrative aids, and advice to member congregations.

-Member congregations are urged to participate in regional learning retreats organized by the Orthodox Union and to plan and execute their own synagogue retreats and intensive learning programs.

-Rabbis and officers of member congregations are urged to subscribe to Luach Limud, to use it regularly, and to encourage their congregants by their example. We encourage all synagogues to use Luach Limud as a tool in their adult education programs.

-Member synagogues are encouraged to expand their adult education programs into the community wherever appropriate. We urge the introduction of classes of Jewish interest in local colleges and other institutes of adult education, the establishment of shiurim in locations outside the synagogue, such as business districts or hospitals, and any other activity which will help bring the words of Torah to all Jews.

D. Hebrew Day Schools

The Yeshiva Day School movement in North America, from the elementary through the kolel level, is the Orthodox community's outstanding achievement. It has become the major instrument by which American Jews transmit their unique culture, history, traditions and practices to their children. Its impact is evident in the strength of our young leadership.

The cost of a day school education has risen dramatically. Tuition reaches into the thousands of dollars in many schools. In many homes the cost of Jewish education prevents children from attending day schools.

Paradoxically, the high price of this education has led schools to cut costs wherever possible, including in the salary levels of teachers and administrators. The result is that the best and most promising of our young people choose to enter careers other than Jewish education from economic necessity. We cannot allow this intolerable situation to continue and we urge day schools and yeshivot to upgrade the levels of their salaries.

We believe it is incumbent upon the community to support educational institutions and to ensure that each child is given the opportunity to receive a Jewish education.

The Orthodox Union has long been among the advocates of government aid to the non religious aspects of private education.



WE THEREFORE RESOLVE THAT:

-The Orthodox Union and its member synagogues take active roles in supporting Hebrew Day Schools on the elementary, high schools and post high school levels by contributing time, talent, and effort generously to day schools, yeshivot, and women's seminaries to insure their continued existence.

-Congregations are encouraged to mount intensive campaigns in communities to increase allocations of the local Federation to Hebrew Day Schools and yeshivot and to have Federations endorse these institutions as appropriate forms of education for our young people.

-Member synagogues are urged to participate in Jewish community council discussions on government aid to parochial schools, attempting to dissuade them from joining in litigation opposing such aid. When not successful, congregations should dissent from the council's statements and activities on this issue.

-Member synagogues are urged to actively seek to augment enrollment in yeshivot and day schools until every Jewish child of school age is enrolled in a day school or yeshivah program.

-The Orthodox Union and its constituency strongly support the passage of the Packwood-Moynihan Tuition Tax Credit legislation and pledges to work for passage of similar legislation authorizing the funding of appropriate programs designed to meet remedial and other needs of private education.

E. Youth

The return to full Jewish living of increasing numbers of Jewish youth is one of the most rewarding aspects of our era. The growth of the day school movement, the establishment of Mesivtot and Yeshivot G'dolot, and the myriad of youth groups and organizations working to spread the message of Torah to our youth have all contributed towards the reawakening of Jewish commitment in once alienated young adults. We can only look upon this development with pride and renewed hope for the future of Jewish life in our communities. Nevertheless, the vast majority of North American Jewish youth remain oblivious to the message of Torah Judaism.

The Orthodox Union is especially proud of the role that the National Conference of Synagogue Youth has played in helping to stem the idea of Jewish apathy among our youth and encourage their Jewish growth. NCSY has become a major force in the shaping of tomorrow's Jewish leaders.

NCSY's alumni can be found among the ranks of the top lay and professional leadership of the Jewish community. They have become the nucleus of thriving communities around the world. Former NCSYers are



now rabbis and teachers. They serve on the boards of our synagogues and on the commissions, and the Boards, and as officers of the Union. At a time when many major adult Jewish organizations find it difficult to recruit "new blood", Orthodox synagogues and the Orthodox Union are deeply indebted to the creators and pioneers of NCSY for maintaining and producing a generation of Jewish leaders.

**WE THEREFORE RESOLVE THAT:**

-The Orthodox Union shall continue to place NCSY and the education of Jewish youth as one of its top priorities, and will continue to allocate its financial and personnel resources for its programs.

-Member synagogues are encouraged to help meet NCSY's escalating program and staff costs through local and regional fundraising efforts.

-The Orthodox Union shall address the serious problems facing Jewish youth on college campuses, and should work with the existing organizations active in this field to strengthen Torah Judaism on campuses across the country.

**VIII. PERSONAL AND COMMUNAL ETHICS**

At each prayer service, we look forward to a utopian time "le-taken olam bemalchut Shakai," when the world will be perfected through human striving and united under the reign of the Almighty. Our sages have taught us that this profound phrase is our moral imperative to strive for an ideal society in which each individual behaves ethically and with kindness as G-d has commanded us.

The Torah teaches us that it is incumbent upon every individual to act honestly and beyond reproach in dealings with the government, within society, and with the poor among us. We are especially pained by such shameful practices as the defrauding of government programs designed to help the needy, the creating of false charitable deductions, and the growing national plague of income tax evasion.

American affluence also challenges us to husband our resources wisely. Ostentatious and elaborate Bar and Bat Mitzvah and wedding celebrations set false standards of oneupmanship and prestige. Money that could be better spent on tzedakah is wasted on extravagant social affairs. The less affluent are often unduly pressured to strain their financial resources in an effort to keep up.

**WE THEREFORE RESOLVE THAT:**

-The Orthodox Union calls upon rabbis, congregations, schools and NCSY groups to devote shiurim, classes and drashot to Jewish ethics and to their practical application. We mandate the Communal Relations Commission to distribute educational materials on issues of communal and individual financial dealings.

-Member congregations, their affiliated bodies, and all other Jewish organizations are urged to examine their financial practices to ensure that all procedures are totally above reproach. We urge rabbis, community leaders, lawyers, accountants, and businessmen to advise Jewish institutions on the propriety of financial and communal practices.

-Each congregation, under the leadership of its rabbi, is urged to set community standards for all family and community celebrations. A gift of tzedakah is encouraged as a part of the festivities. We mandate the Communal Relations Commission to develop and circulate to all member congregations suggested guidelines for their consideration.

-The Orthodox Union calls on all Jewish institutions to pay more attention to their greatest resource, their staffs of the devoted Jewish civil servants. Our institutions, organizations, synagogues and schools must see to the needs of these dedicated professionals and ensure that they remain working for Klal Yisrael in dignity by paying them adequate wages now and providing for their future needs by means of insurance programs and pension plans.

[Orthorgs.statemnt]  
January 28, 1988  
[Latest update - 4 p.m.]

IN RESPONSE TO THE BIG LIE

The current unrest in Israel has given rise to renewed anti-Israel coverage on the part of the media reminiscent of the days of the Lebanon campaign. The constant one sided images portrayed on television and by newspaper photos have unfairly portrayed the victim as the victimizer. This coverage beclouds the fact that stone throwers are killers, not peaceful demonstrators, no less than those who throw Molotov cocktails or firebombs or use weapons with an intent to kill. To be sure, stone throwing in Gaza is not a new phenomenon. The International edition of the Jerusalem Post recently reported that 52 years ago the famous archaeologist, James Leslie Starkley, was, according to his son, stoned on the way to Gaza.

Not only have weighted images needlessly hurt the good name of the people of Israel, equally damaging is the undue prominence given to statements by the miniscule number of Jewish organizations which might have their place in private communication but are not appropriately addressed to the Israel government through the U.S. media. Not only are such public statements unrealistic and damaging in their intent but they encourage the demonstrators and the intransigent to gang up with Israel's enemies, the PLO, the Syrians, Moslem fundamentalists and the Russians in order to create an environment in which they hope to bully the Israelis to make political or territorial concessions which can only add fuel to the destructive appetites of Israel's enemies. Only the naive can believe that these

strategies will lead to either peace or stability.

We want the government and people of Israel to know that we stand behind them and support their efforts to deal with the present unrest. At a time when Arab and Soviet advocates of violence and terrorism should be utterly rejected by the world community, Israel, the victim of abuse is being condemned for acting in self defense. Paradoxically, instead of condemnation there is silence concerning those who incite riots or use deadly force against Israeli civilians and soldiers.

Israel needs and enjoys the active and vocal support of most Americans and particularly of the American Jewish community. We are saddened, indeed, by recent criticism of Israel by some American Jewish leaders and by suggestions to the people and government of Israel as to how the present tensions can be reduced or eliminated. It ill behooves American Jews from the comfortable quarters of their head offices to issue statements that may well endanger the safety, security and survival of Israel.

The violent demonstrations which we witness in Israel today are rooted in an illusion of long standing that has been adopted by far too many Arabs in the Middle East. Many Arabs have employed violence and terrorism since the very beginning of Jewish settlement in Palestine in the early 1900's in the mistaken view that these methods might discourage the return of the Jew to his homeland or resolve issues which belong at the conference table, -- a table which Arabs have stubbornly avoided, prior to the declaration of Israel's independence and since that time as well, with the sole exception of Anwar Sadat. What is

most tragic is that the pursuit of this illusory strategy is the principle obstacle to peace and reconciliation. Israeli leaders have repeated over and over again their desire to meet responsible Arab leaders and their readiness to negotiate without pre-conditions so long as their Arab counterparts are prepared to recognize the State of Israel and renounce the use of terror. They wait in vain for the appearance of such responsible Arab negotiating partners -- despite statements by all Israeli leaders, without exception, calling for such negotiations.

No nation yearns for peace with greater passion than Israel and the Jewish people. We look forward to the immediate restoration of order, and to a new readiness on the part of the leaders of the Arab countries to resolve their outstanding differences with Israel at the conference table.

Israel has certainly shown far, far greater restraint to violent Arab demonstrators than any neighboring Arab state has ever shown toward peaceful demonstrations against government policy. Ironically, Israel is the only country in the entire Middle East in which Arabs can peacefully demonstrate and enjoy any measure of political or religious freedom. The recent mass slaughter in Mecca is only the latest example of how dissent is treated by those who would now rally world public opinion to condemn Israel.

Where were the raised voices, where was the TV footage, where was the outrage, where were the daily op ed pieces over the 2,500 Palestinians who have been massacred since 1985 in the Shiite siege of Palestinian districts in South Beirut? Does not Israel deserve just a little even handed truth telling?