



ARZA Concerning Zionism

ARZA is the Association of Reform Zionists of America and is the Zionist wing of the Reform Movement. NFTY is an affiliate and close partner of ARZA. ARZA offers resources in helping explain the relationship the Reform Movement has established with Israel.

5.2.4 ARZA Information Concerning Zionism

ARZA, the Association of Reform Zionists of America – the Zionist arm and voice of the Reform Movement in the United States* – endeavors to make Israel fundamental to the sacred lives and Jewish identity of Reform Jews. As a Zionist organization, ARZA champions activities that further enhance Israel as a pluralistic, just and democratic Jewish state.

ARZA's goals are threefold:

- ARZA educates American Reform Jews about Israel
- ARZA engages American Reform Jews towards action and advocacy on behalf of Israel
- ARZA organizes and leads unique missions to Israel

ARZA is the Zionist arm of the Reform Movement and an affiliate of the Union for Reform Judaism, serving 1.5 million Reform/Progressive Jews. ARZA is the vehicle for the mass participation of American Reform Jews, focusing on Israel, with an emphasis on advocacy and travel, and Zionist education in America. ARZA's initiative ISRAEL MATTERS: Our Commitment to Israel provides the foundation for programming and advocacy relating to the core mission. ARZA's strong presence as the representative of Reform Judaism in the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency for Israel ensures annual support for the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism and the Israel Religious Action Center, as does a percentage of ARZA membership dues. Through support for our Progressive Movement in Israel, ARZA promotes Reform Jewish identity, pluralism, and Zionism.

As an affiliate of the URJ, ARZA is formed of voluntary members who submit dues separate from their URJ congregational dues. For more information on ARZA, see <http://www.arza.org/>.

*ARZA Canada serves the same aims as ARZA for Canadian Reform Jews

ARZA Israel Projects

ARZA (The Association of Reform Zionists of America) proudly supports major projects of the **IMPJ** (The Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism) as well as the **IRAC** (Israel Religious Action Center). A significant portion of membership dues helps ARZA stand with the IMPJ to strengthen Reform Jewish education, institutions, and programs, and to inspire a shared liberal religious consciousness among Jews in Israel and America.



ARZA SUPPORTS ISRAEL PROJECTS OF THE IMPJ

RECOVERY:

1. "Recovery through Community" – Healing the pain inflicted by terrorism through shared community-sponsored activities and programs, and providing moral and practical support.
2. Summer Camp Experiences – de-stressing Israeli children, including those from economically disadvantaged families, and providing them with a sense of security, hope, and joy.

EDUCATION:

1. Forty five kindergartens – providing exciting, informative, age-appropriate Judaic and social justice curriculum for pre-scholars and their parents, taught by Progressive Rabbis and teachers.
2. Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation for Reform and secular children, including those from economically disadvantaged families.
3. Young Adult Leadership Forum (YALF) - Involving College-age secular youth with Progressive Judaism through a unique social justice program, incorporating relevant Jewish sources and a hands-on approach.

CONVERSION:

1. Sustaining Progressive conversions, through study and support groups.
2. Reaching out to the non-affiliated, including 300,000 Russian immigrants, and helping them prepare for and undergo conversion.

ARZA SUPPORTS IRAC

The Israel Religious Action Center (**IRAC**) is the public and legal advocacy arm of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism (IMPJ). IRAC's mission is to advance religious freedom and pluralism, tolerance, social justice, and civil liberties in Israel. The Legal Aid Centers for Olim, a division of IRAC, provide legal aid to new immigrants in Israel.

ARZA RESOLUTION ON LONG-TERM EXPERIENCES IN ISRAEL FOR OUR 16-25 YEAR-OLDS

Whereas, throughout the history of Modern Zionism, youth movements have played a critical role in educating young adults about the value of Zionism, acting on behalf of the Jewish community in the Land of Israel and mobilizing young and old around the world to combine passion and action on behalf of those living in the Land of Israel. Today, as many youth seek to connect with the Land and People of Israel, those who support Zionist education have a responsibility to provide meaningful experiences in Reform long-term programs in Israel. The moment has arrived in the history of the People of Israel to recapture the passion and action among Reform youth, similar to the work of the early 20th century Zionist youth movements, in order to create a new generation of Reform Jews who make Israel a central part of their Jewish identity – a generation whose passion for and action on behalf of the Land and People of Israel defines them as Reform Zionists.

Whereas, the Central Conference of American Rabbis adopted among its Statement of Principles (1999) that, "We affirm that both Israeli and Diaspora Jewry should remain vibrant and interdependent communities. As we urge Jews who reside outside Israel to learn Hebrew as a living language and to make periodic visits to Israel in order to study and to deepen their relationship to the Land and its people, so do we affirm that Israeli Jews have much to learn from the religious life of Diaspora Jewish communities."



Whereas, in 2004 the Israeli Cabinet approved the MASA Program – a revolutionary initiative, unprecedented in scope of bringing 1 out of every 5 young Jews from around the world to a program in Israel of a semester to one-year duration which aims to bring 20,000 young Jews from around the world each year for a semester to year-long program of studying and volunteering in Israel. MASA is a joint project of the Jewish Agency for Israel and the Government of Israel. The project will be financed from three sources: the Jewish Agency (through donations to the United Jewish Communities (in the US) and Keren Hayesod), the Government of Israel and the families of program participants. The commitment to fund MASA includes an annual budget of 50 million dollars beginning in the year 2008-2009.

Whereas, studies done among young people who were on a long-term program in Israel show clearly the positive influence on their lives and their identity. 91% marry Jews, 75% participate in community activities and synagogues, 71% return to Israel for additional visits, 57% make donations to Jewish causes and to Israel, 36% of them send their children to Jewish day schools and a large percentage of them immigrate to Israel.

Be it resolved that ARZA applauds and endorses the Eisendrath International Exchange Program (URJ) for high school students and the Carmel Program: Israel Study Year and Progressive Beit Midrash (Leo Baeck Education Center, University of Haifa and URJ) for high school graduates and will actively promote maximal participation in these programs among Reform Jews while encouraging Reform leaders, lay, professional, and parents, to actively recruit more students for these programs.

Be it further resolved that ARZA will serve as a catalyst in partnership with the broader Reform community in North America in the creation of other long term programs in Israel to meet the needs of our 16-25 year-old Reform Jews, working with the outstanding institutions of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism and others to create engaging models of involvement.

Be it further resolved that ARZA plans to facilitate a process to establish major sources of funding to meet the financial needs of developing, administering and attending such programs.