



What does Reform Judaism Say about Israel?

The following are excerpts from the five declarations of principles that have been supported by the CCAR, the rabbinic leadership of the Reform movement. Starting with the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885, and finishing with the Pittsburgh Platform of 1999, the relationship between Reform Judaism's principles and Zionism, the Jewish People, and Medinat Yisrael have gone through enormous changes. While this is to be expected in a religious movement that replicates Judaism's inherent dynamism, it also stems from the growing role that the State of Israel has been playing and will continue to play in the Jewish world.

1885 Pittsburgh Conference

We recognize, in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect, the approaching of the realization of Israel's great Messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice, and peace among all men. ***We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine***, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.

1937 Columbus Platform

Israel . Judaism is the soul of which Israel is the body. Living in all parts of the world, Israel has been held together by the ties of a common history, and above all, by the heritage of faith. Though we recognize in the group loyalty of Jews who have become estranged from our religious tradition, a bond which still unites them with us, we maintain that it is by its religion and for its religion that the Jewish people has lived. The non-Jew who accepts our faith is welcomed as a full member of the Jewish community. In all lands where our people live, they assume and seek to share loyally the full duties and responsibilities of citizenship and to create seats of Jewish knowledge and religion. ***In the rehabilitation of Palestine, the land hallowed by memories and hopes, we behold the promise of renewed life for many of our brethren. We affirm the obligation of all Jewry to aid in its upbuilding as a Jewish homeland by endeavoring to make it not only a haven of refuge for the oppressed but also a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life.*** Throughout the ages it has been Israel's mission to witness the Divine in the face of every form of paganism and materialism. We regard it as our historic task to cooperate with all men in the establishment of the kingdom of God, of universal brotherhood, Justice, truth and peace on earth. This is our Messianic goal.

A Centenary Perspective, 1976

The People Israel -- The Jewish people and Judaism defy precise definition because both are in the process of becoming. Jews, by birth or conversion, constitute an uncommon union of faith and peoplehood. Born as Hebrews in the ancient Near East, we are bound together like all ethnic groups by language, land, history, culture, and institutions. But the people of Israel is unique because of its involvement with God and its resulting perception of the human condition. Throughout our long history



our people has been inseparable from its religion with its messianic hope that humanity will be redeemed.

Our Obligations: The State of Israel and the Diaspora -- We are privileged to live in an extraordinary time, one in which a third Jewish commonwealth has been established in our people's ancient homeland. **We are bound to that land and to the newly reborn State of Israel by innumerable religious and ethnic ties. We have been enriched by its culture and ennobled by its indomitable spirit. We see it providing unique opportunities for Jewish self-expression. We have both a stake and a responsibility in building the State of Israel, assuring its security, and defining its Jewish character. We encourage aliyah for those who wish to find maximum personal fulfillment in the cause of Zion. We demand that Reform Judaism be unconditionally legitimized in the State of Israel .**

At the same time that we consider the State of Israel vital to the welfare of Judaism everywhere, we reaffirm the mandate of our tradition to create strong Jewish communities wherever we live. A genuine Jewish life is possible in any land, each community developing its own particular character and determining its Jewish responsibilities.The State of Israel and the Diaspora, in fruitful dialogue, can show how a people transcends nationalism even as it affirms it, thereby setting an example for humanity which remains largely concerned with dangerously parochial goals.

Reform Judaism & Zionism: A Centenary Platform, 1997

II. From Degradation to Sovereignty

Centuries of Jewish persecution, culminating in the *Shoah*, demonstrated the risks of powerlessness. **We, therefore, affirm Am Yisrael's reassertion of national sovereignty, but we urge that it be used to create the kind of society in which full civil, human, and religious rights exist for all its citizens.** Ultimately, *Medinat Yisrael* will be judged not on its military might but on its character. **While we view Eretz Yisrael as sacred**, the sanctity of Jewish life takes precedence over the sanctity of Jewish land.

III. Our Relationship to the State of Israel

Even as Medinat Yisrael serves uniquely as the spiritual and cultural focal point of world Jewry, Israeli and Diaspora Jewry are inter-dependent, responsible for one another, and partners in the shaping of Jewish destiny.

A Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism, Pittsburgh , 1999

We are Israel , a people aspiring to holiness, singled out through our ancient covenant and our unique history among the nations to be witnesses to God's presence. We are linked by that covenant and that history to all Jews in every age and place.

We are committed to the (mitzvah) of (ahavat Yisrael), love for the Jewish people, and to (k'lal Yisrael), the entirety of the community of Israel . Recognizing that (kol Yisrael arevim zeh ba-zeh), all Jews are responsible for one another, we reach out to all Jews across ideological and geographical boundaries.



We embrace religious and cultural pluralism as an expression of the vitality of Jewish communal life in Israel and the Diaspora.

We are committed to (Medinat Yisrael), the State of Israel , and rejoice in its accomplishments. We affirm the unique qualities of living in (Eretz Yisrael), the land of Israel , and encourage (aliyah), immigration to Israel .

We are committed to a vision of the State of Israel that promotes full civil, human and religious rights for all its inhabitants and that strives for a lasting peace between Israel and its neighbors.

We are committed to promoting and strengthening Progressive Judaism in Israel , which will enrich the spiritual life of the Jewish state and its people.

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.

In all these ways and more, Israel gives meaning and purpose to our lives.