

COUNTDOWN FOR 37th WORLD ZIONIST CONGRESS Framework for Electing US Delegates Being Set

The countdown has begun! In eighteen months, in October, 2015, representatives of world Jewry – 190 from Israel, 145 from the United States and 165 from the rest of the world – will convene in Jerusalem for the 37th World Zionist Congress.

The four-day Congress, whose exact dates have not yet been set, will follow in the traditions of the First Zionist Congress that was convened by Theodore Herzl in the Swiss city of Basel in August, 1897. That first congress set in motion the wheels that ultimately led to the establishment of the State of Israel, a mere 50 years after the founding Swiss event. When world Jewry meets in 2015, the impact of the decisions taken will be felt for years to come.

But how are the delegates to this international parliament of the Jewish People chosen? While the World Zionist Organization requires that the delegates be selected by democratic means, it is up to every country to determine the procedures that will be employed. For example, the makeup of the Israeli delegation, which represents 38% of the total Congress, is based on the results of the most recent elections for the Knesset, with all parties elected to the Knesset that define themselves by their affirmation of the WZO's Jerusalem Program as Zionist, ie, all except the Arab and the Ashkenazi Haredi parties, receiving two Congress representatives for every elected Member of Knesset.

In contrast, in countries with small Jewish populations that have less than ten representatives to the Congress, ie, most countries in Latin America and Europe, an arrangement may be concluded to divide up the limited number of places among different local Zionist groups.

It is in countries like Argentina, Australia, Canada, France and especially the United States, with delegations ranging in size from a dozen on up, where separate, unique Zionist elections will likely be conducted. Here in the United States, which sends the second largest group comprising 29% of the representatives to the Congress, elections have been a standard element in determining the makeup of our delegation. In the past 30 years, democratic elections have been held under the auspices of the American

Zionist Movement four times: in 1987, 1997, 2002 and 2006. Only the congresses in 1992 and 2010 saw American delegations that were not chosen by democratic elections.

But while elections have been the standard means for electing American delegates, different models for determining who can vote have been employed in the past. For example, through the elections in 1987, anyone who was a member of a Zionist organization affiliated with the American Zionist Federation (now the American Zionist Movement) was qualified to vote. Since 1997, however, the rules were changed to disconnect organizational membership from voting, with the result that any American Jew was eligible to vote but had to first register to vote in order to receive a ballot.

The responsibility for determining the framework for selecting the American delegates to the 37th World Zionist Congress is up to the Area Election Committee, a body in which all American parties that participated in the last Zionist Congress have representatives. Since the WZO constitution does not dictate the procedures for elections, each election is governed by its own rules and is not bound by the decisions taken for previous votes. A decision for the 2015 World Zionist Congress is expected later this spring.



MERCAZ President Janet Tobin (2nd left) and fellow Conservative Movement presidents Richard Skolnik (USCJ), Rita Wertlieb (WLCJ) and Rabbi Gerald Skolnik (RA) with immediate past Conference of Presidents Chair Richard Stone (center).



Around The Conservative/Masorti World

WLCJ PARTNERS IN NEW ISRAELI BNOT MITZVAH PROMOTION

Women's League for Conservative Judaism has joined with the Masorti Movement in Israel in a new initiative to encourage more Israeli girls to celebrate their becoming bnot mitzvah. The pilot program, designed for mothers and daughters, aims to introduce synagogue rituals and customs, such as tallit and aliyot, that most Israelis commonly associate only with men. For more information, go to www.wlcj.org.

RAMAH'S "TRY" PROGRAM TO RUN SPRING AND FALL

Starting in 2014, high school students interested in spending a semester in Israel under the auspices of the Conservative Movement will have the opportunity to live and learn in Israel both in the spring and the fall. For the first time, TRY, the Ramah high school in Israel, will be running two semester programs a year, instead of just one course in the spring.

Fall semester students will enjoy experiencing the special Israeli flavor of the fall holidays, from Rosh Hashanah through Hanukkah, in addition to studying the regular Israel Core Course for which TRY is noted. Moreover, students in both semester programs will participate in a weeklong trip to Poland as an integral part of their Israel studies. For more information, go to www.ramah.co.il.

NEW MASORTI RABBINICAL PROGRAM IN GERMANY

This past fall, an important milestone occurred in the renaissance of German Jewry, the fastest growing Jewish community in the world, with the opening within the School of Jewish Theology at the University of Potsdam of the Zacharias Frankel College, a new European Conservative/Masorti rabbinical program named in honor of the 19th century founder of "Positive Historical" (later Conservative) Judaism.

The new rabbinical track, founded in partnership between the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies in Los Angeles and the Abraham Geiger College, the Liberal Jewish school based at the University of Potsdam which offers graduate and rabbinical degrees, will enable Geiger students the option of gaining Conservative ordination and becoming members of the Rabbinical Assembly.

As Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson, Dean of the Ziegler School, said: "The Zacharias Frankel College is dedicated to training a new cadre of Masorti/Conservative rabbis in Europe who are deeply versed in Jewish texts, committed to a life of mitzvot and the love of the Jewish tradition, and who are capable of transmitting the beauty and wisdom of Judaism to others." For more information, go to www.zacharias-frankel-college.de.

CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT *Israel Trips* 2014

April 20 – May 9, 2014

Jewish Growth Tour of Eastern Europe
Price per person: \$3,199
Contact: Rabbi Dov Peretz Elkins
(609) 497-7375
DPE@JewishGrowth.org

May 4 – 12, 2014

Beth Israel, Owings Mills, MD to Morocco
Price per person: \$2,689 (land only)
Contact: Rabbi Jay Goldstein
(410) 654-0803
rebjay@aol.com

May 11 – 23, 2014

Temple Beth Or, Brick, NJ
Price per person: \$2,895 (land only)
Contact: Rabbi Robert Rubin
(732) 458-7800
templebethorbrick@verizon.net

June 8 – 19, 2014

Bnai Jeshurun, Pepper Pike, OH to Spain/Portugal
Price per person: \$5,699
Contact: Diane Shalom
(216) 831-6555 X 104
dianeshalom@bnaijeshurun.org

June 9 – 20, 2014

B'nai Torah Cong., Boca Raton, FL
Price per person: \$3,365 (land only)
Contact: Rabbi David Englander
(561) 392-8566 X 341
rabbi.englender@bnai-torah.org

June 25 – July 7, 2014

Pride of Israel Cong., Toronto ON, Canada
Price per person: \$2,995 (land only)
Contact: Rabbi Jen Gorman
(416) 667-1717
jgorman@masorti.ca

June 29 – July 8, 2014

Beth Shalom, Columbia, MD
Price per person: \$2,649 (land only)
Contact: Rabbi Susan Grossman
(410) 531-5115
execsecy@beth-shalom.net

July 1 – July 11, 2014

American Friends of Neve Hanna
Price per person: \$2,870 (land only)
Contact: Janet Tobin
(212) 533-2061
afnevehanna@gmail.com

June 29 – July 10, 2014

USCJ Family Trip to Israel
Price per person: \$2,450 (land only)
Contact: Rabbi Charles Savenor
(646) 519-9210
Savenor@uscj.org

June 29 – July 14, 2014

Temple Israel, Sharon, MA
Price per person: \$5,250
Contact: Hazzan Steven W. Dress
(781) 784-3986 X 20
sdress@tisharon.org

July 6 – 21, 2014

Bnai Jeshurun, Pepper Pike, OH
Price per person: \$5,588
Contact: Diane Shalom
(216) 831-6555 X 104
dianeshalom@bnaijeshurun.org

July 7 – 16, 2014

B'nai Shalom, West Orange, NJ
Price per person: \$3,750
Contact: Rabbi Robert L. Tobin
(973) 731-0160
rabbittobin@bnaishalom.net

August 10 – 21, 2014

Beth Shalom, Manchester, CT
Price per person: \$2,995 (land only)
Contact: Rabbi Richard Plavin
(860) 643-9563
myrabbi@myshul.org

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to enroll online on our secure membership website for the new 2013/2014 fiscal calendar. Annual dues are \$54 for families, \$36 for individuals and \$12 for students.



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