

Marching Towards WUPJ's Next Century: A Strategic Vision

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The World Union for Progressive Judaism is celebrating a great milestone. Our movement is 100 years old, but in many ways, we are still a young organization. The reason for this is that there have been many WUPJs over the last century. There was the WUPJ that gave Jews an intellectual and cultural home during the tumultuous interwar years in Europe. There was the WUPJ that helped Reform Judaism flourish in North America while rebuilding from the ashes of the Shoa. There was the WUPJ that was among the first organizations in the progressive Jewish world to not only stand up to support the new State of Israel, but to also demand that Israel be a home for all Jews of any denomination. There was the WUPJ that marched into the Soviet Union with the message that Jews and Judaism would not only survive here, but also thrive.

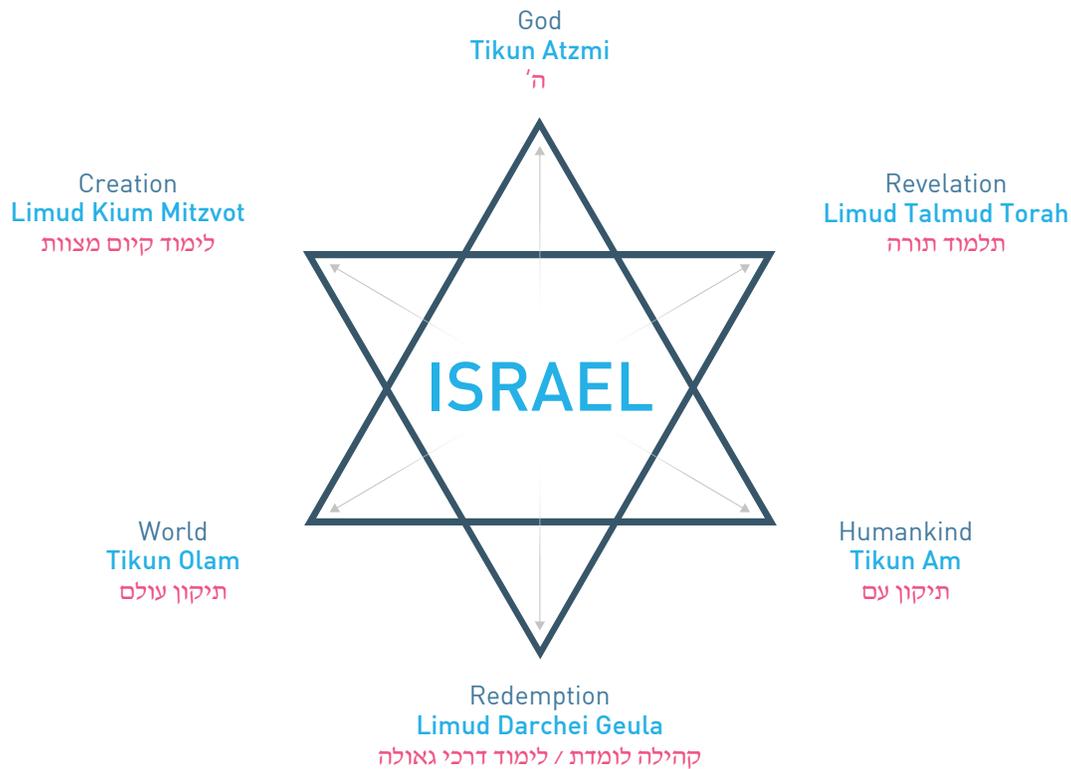


These, amongst many other WUPJs, all had several things in common. They were grounded in the values that have defined liberal Jews since the enlightenment, and they continued to find solutions for living fully in the larger world while still holding close our Jewishness. WUPJ has never been afraid to face hard questions about our future as a people. We can do this, because we have a vision for progressive Judaism that both deals with the challenges of Jewish continuity in the face of modernity and with Judaism's relevance in the lives of our individual members. It is that vision for the next 100 years that I want us to focus on as we celebrate the last 100 years.

WUPJ's strategic vision for its next century will start by looking to the years between 2021-2026. For many years I have been inspired by Franz Rosenzweig's work of modern Jewish philosophy: The Star of Redemption.

In this important work of Jewish thought, we see the Star of David as a geometrical system that can represent and connect us to the different aspects needed to find meaning and purpose not only for our organization, but for us as Jews.

As we know, the Star of David is formed by two intertwining triangles.



The first triangle encloses the space for Tikkun, a verb, an act of repairing: God (Tikun Atzmi), Humankind (Tikun Am), and World (Tikun Olam).

1) Tikun Atzmi (God): Here we look to repair the divine spark within ourselves through a spiritual experience of living in communities of practice that support renewal. To change the world, we must first change ourselves. However, we do not change alone; our individual spiritual quest must be part of a process of building networks of belonging, and communities with shared values that span great distances.

מוֹדָה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיִם שֶׁחֲזַרְתָּ בִּי נְשָׁמְתִי בְּחֻמְלָה, רַבָּה אֲמוּנָתְךָ

אֱלֹהֵי נְשָׁמָה שְׁנַתְּתָּ בִּי טְהוֹרָה הִיא אֶתְּהָ בְּרֵאשִׁית אֶתְּהָ יְצַרְתָּה אֶתְּהָ נִפְחַתְּהָ בִּי וְאֶתְּהָ מְשַׁמְרָה בְּקִרְבִּי וְאֶתְּהָ עֲתִיד לְטֹלָה מִמֶּנִּי וְלִהְיוֹתִי בִּי לְעֵתִיד לְבָא, כֹּל זָמַן שֶׁהִנְשָׁמָה בְּקִרְבִּי מוֹדָה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ הַיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתַי רַבּוֹן כָּל הַמַּעֲשִׂים אֲדוֹן כָּל הַנְּשָׁמוֹת: בְּרוּךְ אַתְּהָ הַיְהוָה הַמְחַזֵּיר נְשָׁמוֹת לְפָגְרִים מֵתִים

2) Tikun Am (Peoplehood): We look at ways to repair our own social fabric as a Jewish people. We are the heirs and beneficiaries of a particular civilization with its own culture, language, history, and a



collective memory. This connection to our past and shared peoplehood serves to connect us through time and space amongst the diversity of our global Jewish experiences.

תקע בשופר גדול לחרותנו ושא נס לקבץ גליותינו וקבצנו נחד מארבע כנפות הארץ : ברוך אתה יהוה מקבץ נדח? עמו ישראל

השיבה שופטינו כבראשונה ויועצינו כבתחלה והסר ממנו גון ואנחה ומלוך עלינו אתה יהוה לבדך בחדס וברחמים וצדקנו במשפט

ולירושלים עירך ברחמים תשוב ותשכון בתוכה כאשר דברת ובנה אותה בקרוב בנימינו בנין עולם וכסא דוד מהרה לתוכה תכין : ברוך אתה יהוה בונה ירושלים

הי רצון מלפני אבינו שבשמים שנסמע ונתבשר בשורות טובות ישועות ונקמות ויקבץ נדחינו מארבע כנפות הארץ ונאמר אמן

אחינו כל בית ישראל הנתונים בצרה ובשביה העומדים ביו בים ובין בניבשה המקום ירחם עליהם ויוציאם מצרה לרוחה ומאפלה לאורה ומשעבוד לגאולה השתא בעגלא ובזמן קריב ונאמר אמן

3) Tikun Olam (The Larger World): Our Jewish peoplehood is only the starting point, and those values serve to guide us as we find our place in the larger human family. The same values and commitments must be used to repair and strengthen our relationship and connection to all of humanity, and to the planet itself. Jewish values must be translated into actions that impact our world.

לתקן עולם במלכות שדי

ויקבלו כלם את על מלכותך, ותמלך עליהם מהרה לעולם ועד, כי המלכות שלך היא ולעולמי עד תמלוך בכבוד, ככתוב בתורתך יהוה ימלך לעלם ועד : ונאמר והיה יהוה למלך על כל הארץ ביום ההוא והיה אחד ושמו אחד

דבר אל-פלעזת בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם קדשים תהיו כי קדוש אני יהוה אלהיכם

איש אמו ואביל תיראו ואת שבתתי תשמרו אני יהוה אלהיכם

ובקצרכם את קציר ארצכם לא תכלה פאת שדה לקצר ולקט קצירך לא תלקט



וכרמך לא תעולל ופרט פרמך לא תלקט לעני ולגר תעזב אתם אני יהנה אלהיכם
 לא תגנבו ולא תכחשו ולא תשקרו איש בעמיתו
 ולא תשבעו בשמי לשקר וחללת את שם אלהיך אני יהנה
 לא תעשק את רעך ולא תגזל לא תליו פעלת שכיר אתך עד בקר
 לא תקלל חרש ולפני עור לא תתן מכשל ונראת מאלהיך אני יהנה
 לא תעשו עול במשפט לא תשא פנידל ולא תהזר פני גדול בצדק תשפט עמיתך
 לא תלך רכיל בעמיתך לא תעמד עלידם רעה אני יהנה
 לא תשגא את אחיך בלבבך הוכח תוכיח את עמיתך ולא תשא עליו חטא
 לא תקום ולא תטר את בני עמך ואהבת לרעה כמוך אני יהנה
 לא תאכלו עליהם לא תנחשו ולא תעונו
 לא תקפו פאת ראשכם ולא תשחית את פאת זקנך
 מפני שיבה תקום והזרת פני זקן ונראת מאלהיך אני יהנה
 וכי יגור אתך גר בארצכם לא תונו אתו
 כפאזרח מקום יהיה לכם הגר | הגר אתכם ואהבת לו כמוך פייגרים הייתם בארץ מצרים אני יהנה אלהיכם
 לא תעשו עול במשפט במדה במשקל ובמשורה
 מאזני צדק אבני צדק איפת צדק והיו צדק והיה לכם אני יהנה אלהיכם אשר הוצאתי אתכם מארץ מצרים
 ושמתם את פלחתי ואת כל משפטי ועשיתם אתם אני יהנה

The second triangle surrounds the space of learning (Limud). Learning is an active process, co-constructed, constantly evolving. Creation (Limud Kium Mitzvot), revelation (Limud Talmud Torah) and

redemption (Limud Darchei Geula).

1) Limud Kium Mitzvot (creation): We seek a Judaism that celebrates mitzvot through the act of creating our diverse responses to ongoing challenges. We seek a Judaism composed of shared practices which are not reduced to simply dogma or the sole domain of one religious denomination. We need a Judaism that is the result of our collective creativity and shared desire to find meaning in our traditions.

אֲנִכְלִי הַתְּנָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים

א יְהִי־לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אַחֲרָיִם עַל־פְּנֵיךָ

לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה־לְךָ פֶסֶל | וְכָל־תְּמוּנָה אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׁמַיִם | מִמַּעַל וְאֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת

לֹא תִשָּׂא אֶת־שֵׁם־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁוֹן

זְכוֹר אֶת־יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ

כִּבְדֹּד אֶת־אָבִיךָ וְאֶת־אִמְךָ לְמַעַן יֵאָרְכוּ יָמֶיךָ עַל הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ

לֹא תִרְצַח: לֹא תִנְאַף: לֹא תִגְזֹב: לֹא־תַעֲנֶה בְרַעַף עַד שֶׁקָּר

לֹא תִחַמַּד בַּיִת רַעַף לֹא־תִחַמַּד אִשֶׁת רַעַף וְעַבְדּוֹ וְאִמְתּוֹ וְשׁוֹר׃ וְחִמְרוֹ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לְרַעַף

2) Limud Talmud Torah (revelation): We see revelation as an on-going process between us and the divine. This is a process that requires study, reflection, dialogue, and critical thinking. Our evolving interpretations not only welcome pluralism, diversity, and creative dialogue, but demand it. This has always been the process through which Jews studied the Torah.

בְּיוֹד אֶתְּהָ אֵלֹהֵינוּ מְלַךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לַעֲסֹק בְּדַבְרֵי תוֹרָה

אֵלֵינוּ דְּבָרִים שְׂאִין לָהֶם שְׁעוֹר הַפֶּאֶה וְהַבְּכוּרִים וְהַרְאִינוּ וְגַמְלִיּוֹת חֻסְדִּים וְתִלְמוּד תּוֹרָה: אֵלֵינוּ דְּבָרִים שְׂאִדָּם אוֹכֵל פְּרוֹתֵיהֶם בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה וְהַקָּרוֹן קִיּוּמָת לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא, וְאֵלֵינוּ הוּן כְּבוֹד אֵב וְאֵם וְגַמְלִיּוֹת חֻסְדִּים וְהַשְׁכָּמַת בַּיִת הַמְדַרְשׁ שְׁחֵרִית וְעַרְבִית וְהַכְנָסַת אוֹרְחִים וּבִקּוּר חוֹלִים וְהַכְנָסַת כָּלָה וְלִנְיַת הַמַּת וְעִיוֹן תְּפִלָּה וְהַבְּאֵת שְׁלוֹם בֵּין אָדָם לְחֵבְרוֹ וּבֵין אִישׁ לְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְתִלְמוּד תּוֹרָה כְּנֻגַד כָּלָם

והערב נא יהנה אלהינו את דברי תורתך בפינו ובפי עמך בית ישראל. ונהיה אנחנו וצאצאינו וצאצאי עמך בית ישראל כלנו יודעי שמך ולומדי תורתך לשמה. ברוך אתה יהוה המלמד תורה לעמו ישראל

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם אשר נתן לנו תורת אמת וחיי עולם נטע בתוכנו: ברוך אתה יהוה נותן התורה עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה ותומכייה מאשר: דרכיה דרכי נעם וכל נתיבותיה שלום

ואהבת את יהוה אלהיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ובכל מאדך: והיו הדברים האלה אשר אנכי מצוה היום עליך לבבך ושונתם לבניך ודברתם בם בשבתך בביתך ובקחתך בדרכך ובשכבך ובקומך: וקשרתם לאות עליך והיו לטטפת בין עיניך: וכתבתם על מזוזות ביתך ובשעריך

3) Limud Darchei Geulah (redemption): We need a vision of redemption that includes our struggle against anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism at all times and in all places. This redemption involves working towards a vision of a Jewish State that is democratic and respects and protects the rights of all minorities. These are the same rights that were denied to us for so many centuries. We affirm a reform Zionism that promotes the development of an Israeli society based on these values.

עזרת אבותינו אתה הוא מעולם מגן ומושיע לבניהם אחריהם בכל דור ודור: ברום עולם מושגך ומשפטיך וצדקתך עד אפסי ארץ: אשרי איש שישמע למצותיך ותורתך ודברך ישים על לבו:

צור ישראל קומה בעזרת ישראל ופדה כנאמך יהודה וישראל, גאלנו יהוה צבאות שמו קדוש ישראל: ברוך אתה יהוה גאל ישראל:

ראה בענינו וריבה ריבנו וגאלנו מהרה למען שמך כי גואל חזק אתה: ברוך אתה יהוה גואל ישראל

את צמח דוד עבדך מהרה תצמיח וקרנו תרום בישועתך כי לישועתך קוינו כל היום: ברוך אתה יהוה מצמיח קרן ישועה

ותחזינה עינינו בשוהך לציון ברממים: ברוך אתה יהוה המחזיר שכינתו לציון

שים שלום טובה וברכה חן וחסד ורחמים עלינו ועל כל ישראל עמך. ברכנו אבינו כלנו כאחד באור פניך. כי באור פניך נתת לנו יהוה אלהינו תורת חיים ואהבת חסד וצדקה וברכה ורחמים וחיים ושלום. וטוב בעיניך לברך את עמך ישראל בכל עת ובכל שעה בשלומך והיו לרצון אמרי פי והגיון לבי לפניך יהוה צורי וגואלי



In this model of a renewed Star of David, at the center of the two intersecting triangles is Israel. Israel is the symbol of Jewish redemption, but its full potential to be a “light for the nations” is still unrealized.

We acknowledge the centrality of Medinat Israel for our Reform movement. WUPJ affirms its conviction that to be a progressive Reform Jew is to be a Zionist. We will not allow those who want to conflate Zionism with their anti-democratic agenda to define what it means to be a Zionist. We will challenge and revisit Zionism through that lens. From Hertzl's dream to the present day, as reformers, we know that we must keep a vision of what our national redemption can mean to us and to the rest of the world.

In summary, the two intertwined triangles, with Israel at the center, articulate the six vertices in the Star of David that forms the core of my vision for the next five years. This Star of David, inspired by Rosensweig's star of redemption, symbolizes the ideological and programmatic guidelines of a Reform/Progressive Judaism that seeks to regain its central role in our lives.

Reform means to *re-form*, or to give a new shape, and it is a process of constant evolution. We define ourselves through a verb, or motion, and not as a finished product. For me, Judaism is not dogma, and we must not be afraid to face our own reform. We will not lose the roots that make us connected to the Jewish tradition. We know who we are and our strongly rooted identity should allow us to open ourselves up to dialogue and exchange. We will learn together how to deepen the spiritual challenges of a Judaism faithful to tradition and relevant to today's context.

The implementation of a vision

Different historical periods have their own metaphors to implement high impact innovations. Today, we are all familiar with the concept of incubators. Originally conceived in the fields of biology and medicine to provide optimal conditions for breeding and growth processes, now a days there is a wide range of incubators that focus on a diversity of areas from social ventures to high tech startups. Incubators provide access to resources and social networks, seed funding, mentoring and training in a collaborative environment. We will be launching an incubator for projects that seek high social impact in the Jewish world. We will learn from the myriad of already existing incubators and accelerators and craft our own. The Star of David will provide a framework for launching programs that have Israel, as defined above, at the center of the intersecting triangles and that share our common vision and goals.



The following are some examples of concrete initiatives that could be housed in our new WUPJ incubator. Some of those projects are likely to be developed and accelerated in the incubator, others might not be fully realized, but what is important is that we create a mechanism for sincere exploration of new ideas and new ways of allowing our members to approach Judaism, Israel, and their thirst to see our improve.

1. A new Zionism: Israeli by choice

We propose that all Jews have the right to be granted Israeli citizenship by choice, following the criteria established by the Law of Return. If Spain, Portugal, Italy and Poland give citizenship to families who have proved their heritage was linked to theirs in the past, why doesn't the State of Israel do this for all Jews who want to prove that they are part of Israel's future. This is different from Aliyah or immigrating to Israel. The key difference here is "by choice", without the obligation to immigrate to Israel, but without the privilege of voting unless we choose to live there.

What does a global Jewish citizenship by choice means? It means saying that we are one Jewish people. It is not just a slogan for Israeli politicians visiting our communities hoping to get our support, while at the same time brushing off our ideas for what the Jewish State should look like. Our progressive voice is absent in Israel, but Israel is the custodian of our shared heritage. This goes beyond the Kotel. If the State of Israel gets to pass laws that define who is a Jew, we must have seat at the table as they make policies and define aspects of Jewish life that affect us all.

We will explore, challenge, and develop this notion of "Israeli by choice" by working with a broad coalition inside and outside the Reform movement, the national Zionist institutions, as well as with Israeli society and political leaders. Just as the pioneers in the early pre-State days dried swamps and defended the young state, it will be the next challenge to transform fundamentalism and fanaticisms that threatens Israeli society. We will make our values strong, because they already resonate with a majority of Israelis, and our voices will be as loud as the young voices of hate running through the streets of Jerusalem and so many other Israeli towns. We have seen in recent days and weeks the result of allowing extremism on both sides to flourish. Our values call for tolerance and co-existence, and nothing will push back this tide until the Government of Israel gives our voice the weight it deserves.

2. Hebrew 2030

We understand Hebrew as much more than a language. It is a part of our identity. WUPJ is going to commit itself to making Hebrew the lingua franca of our movement, as it should be. We are

going to use our education platform to promote the study and use of Hebrew no matter if you are young or just young at heart. We want to create innovative ways to bring the language into the lives of Jews regardless of where they live, and I am committed to having Hebrew be the primary working language for WUPJ by 2030. To put it simply...if Hebrew is a foreign language, Israel will always feel like a foreign country.

3. Values Education: Musar & Midot Tovot. Values and virtues

Education is one of our defining values as a people, and it remains our primary tool for transformation. These are the values that will sustain our reform Jewish life. We affirm, deepen, and expand our traditional educational activities. We will keep our seminars, training programs, non-formal education in youth movements (Netzer) and young adult initiatives (Tamar) but we will also expand to have a permanent education department that integrates virtual and real-world activities for all ages in all our regions. It is not enough for the progressive reform movement to have a youth department or a youth movement, but it must be a young organization in its spirit and ideals. Young people must bring to the organization the dynamism of change, the critical reflective thinking of positive and creative rebelliousness that will push forward our actions in a way that is true to our convictions and our values. We must reach the thousands of Jews who are yet unaffiliated, but who would feel at home in the reform movement. They will not find us unless we go out and actively try to bring them into our progressive Jewish family. The educational programs will be developed in strategic alliances with other academic organizations and related NGOs within and outside the reform / progressive movement. The programs for educators, and volunteer and professional leaders will be oriented in this axis.

4. The Jewish Effective Giving Initiative

This new World Union initiative is intended to encourage Reform rabbis to save lives, by informing their congregations about effective giving to the world's most efficient, life-saving charities working in the developing world. The project is meant to be a bridge between the Reform movement and the emerging, global Effective Altruism movement, which already saves thousands of lives every year. Promoting this idea is going to be a major initiative that will help congregations and the Reform movement inspire young Jewish activists and engage with some amazing new people, fantastic secular Jewish leaders who are leading some of the most impressive efforts to bring about Tikkun Olam of the kind our movement and our faith has always aspired to bring into the lives of our members.



I am convinced that an existential philosophy that promotes a reform / progressive Judaism as a praxis of being and of building communities of meaning, in conjunction with an incubator of initiatives with high social impact in our Jewish and universal practices, will renew and reform our capacity to confront the enormous challenges ahead of us.

This is our program, to be global (World) in vision and local in action in each region, to be united (Union) with shared values in our strength of being originally diverse with our particular identities.

We promote a progressive vision in creativity, disruption, originality and innovation (Progressive) for a wide cultural, national and spiritual identity (Judaism) in its different praxis that allow us to do our part to make the world a better place where the WUPJ does its contribution by leaving our mark for the next century.

רבי סרגיו ברמן

Rabbi Sergio Bergman

Jerusalem, Erev Shavuot 5781