

WASHINGTON DATELINE

BY TRUDE B. FELDMAN
ISRAELITE'S WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT

Betty Ford at RZA Banquet

BETTY FORD made "Jewish banquet history" 48 hours before Rosh Hashanah in the New York Hilton at Rockefeller Center. The occasion was the 65th Annual National Banquet of the Religious Zionists of America. The First Lady flew here to present the 27th Israel Independence Day Award to the Fords' long time friend, Milton Hoffman.

Hoffman, former President and Chairman of the Board of Wilton Caterers and Frozen Foods (kosher), of Spring Valley, New York, had recently dedicated a forest in honor of President Gerald R. Ford of 10,000 trees in the Judean Hills of Jerusalem.

The sight of Betty Ford on the dais surrounded by dozens of rabbis at the kosher dinner was a unique scene to behold, but she seemed to take it all in stride. She was extremely friendly and gracious and appeared to be interested in the proceedings and significance of the dinner. She was even at ease -- though unaware of the intricacies of the religious rituals -- when Blessings before dinner and 'Grace' after the meal were recited in Hebrew.

Dr. Maurice S. Sage, President of Religious Zionists of America, who sat next to Mrs. Ford on the dais, reported that the First Lady was reading the Hebrew translation of 'Grace after meals' and that she also asked him details of the rituals and of the religious Zionist group.

"The mere fact that Mrs. Ford came to a religious Zionist affair is a great tribute to the Jewish community," Dr. Sage told me the next day at Washington's Mayflower Hotel (after a White House Presidential meeting with other Jewish leaders.) "She came at the beginning and stayed till the end and she was a delightful guest, making the evening more pleasant. Her graciousness prevailed on all the faces I saw."

Betty Ford's presence brought special happiness to her friend Milton Hoffman, and "made" his New Year. "I was really overwhelmed that



DR. MAURICE S. SAGE EXPLAINS TO BETTY FORD THE MEANING OF THE HEBREW BLESSINGS AT RZA BANQUET.

Mrs. Ford came to the banquet to honor me," he remarked in an interview at The New York Hilton. "I'm very proud of the significance of the award, but her special trip here to present it certainly did enhance the meaning for me personally."

"This is an emotional evening for me," Mrs. Ford said. "I consider it a personal honor to be invited to give this award to my close friend, Milton Hoffman. He is an unselfish and generous man and I hold him in high esteem. He has a rare concern for mankind and a remarkable determination. We need more people like him."

Betty Ford didn't return to the White House empty-handed. The Zionists also gave her a plaque. Jacques Amsellem, the benefactor, presented her with the Jewish National Fund citation, indicating that "The Betty Ford Woodland" in the American Bicentennial National Park near Jerusalem, will be planted "with love and esteem by the Religious Zionists of America

through the generosity of Jacques Amsellem... New York Hilton Hotel...September 1975.

If the First Lady was the main attraction at the event, Rabbi Emanuel Rackman was the most erudite with his remarks; and Israeli Ambassador Simcha Dinitz -- who flew here directly from Jerusalem -- was the most newsworthy in his detailed summary of the latest Middle East shuttle with Dr. Henry Kissinger.

The dinner also saluted Stanley Dubrow, who was the guest of honor. In addition, the Chief Rabbi Isaac Halevy Herzog Gold Medal Award was presented to: Leonard Aconsky; Albert Alter; Mrs. Maklouf Amsellem; Gerald Bissel; Hanoch Charat; Sanford Deutsch; Israel Friedman; Jerrold Fox; Jack Futterman; Peter Madoff; Efraim Mantz; Howard Miller; Irving Nathan and Benjamin A. Stratmore.

Religious Zionists of America is the organization which has been an advocate of religious Jewish education both in the United States and Israel. It has 100,000 members in the U.S.A. and 140,000 in Israel. RZA is the founder of Bar Ilan University in Israel, the only chartered American University there.

NEW YORK-- 400 American and Canadian college students and graduates of Yeshiva High Schools between the ages of 17 and 22 have just left for a year of intensive Judaic studies in Israel, according to Micha Yinon, Director of the Torah Education Department of the World Zionist Organization - American Section.

NEW YORK -- In a four part series beginning with the October 5 program, the Eternal Light radio series will examine the roles, positions and lifestyles of Jews in colonial America.

NEW YORK -- The Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry has learned 33 year-old Rostislav Natanovich Eppelfeld of Kharkov was sentenced to six years' special regime -- the most severe form of imprisonment -- for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda."

NEW YORK -- Hal C. Davis, President of the American Federation of Musicians, has been selected to receive the Democratic Heritage Award of the American Jewish Committee at a dinner October 16 at the St. Regis Hotel.



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