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decided upon by the Cabinet after prolonged deliberation among the ministers. The National Religious Party wanted to postpone elections even further, but was apparently convinced that a later date would not win approval of the Knesset.

In personally announcing the Cabinet's decision to the press, Begin said he would lead Likud in the election campaign "if my friends express confidence in me." He insisted that despite public opinion polls that show a Labor victory in the next election, Likud could win because of its record. "All the issues will be debated

-- foreign policy, economic policies, social improvements and all other problems," Begin said. "In an election campaign there is never one issue." Begin said the elections would not impair continuation of the autonomy talks with the United States and Egypt. "But that depends on the other parties to the negotiations," he said.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet named Communications Minister Yoram Aridor of Herut as Finance Minister succeeding Yigal Hurwitz whose resignation Jan. 11 caused the Begin government to lose its slim Knesset majority. The Cabinet met in special session to approve the appointment of Aridor who

was given the Communications portfolio only a few weeks ago.

**ISRAEL IS  
OPTIMISTIC  
ABOUT REAGAN**

NEW YORK (WNS) -- Israel's optimism about the new Reagan Administration was voiced here by Harry Hurwitz, Israel's Minister of Information in Washington. Hurwitz told the mid-winter conference of B'nai Zion that President Reagan's statements during the election campaign and since his elec-

tion, particularly his assertion that the Israeli settlements on the West Bank are Legal, gives Israel "much confidence." He added that Reagan's rejection of a PLO state are "encouraging."

Hurwitz praised the departing President Carter for his efforts in achieving the "success of the Camp David accords." Rabbi I. Usher Kirshblum, spiritual leader of the Jewish Center of Kew Gardens-Hills in Queens and the conference chairman, said the government of Premier Menachem Begin "has served the Israeli nation well through the peace accords."

He said the Israeli government had "rightfully declared the legal status of Jerusalem" and the countries that moved their embassies out of the city because of this did so "under duress" of Arab oil blackmail.

**1980 - WHAT A YEAR?**

BY RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM

What kind of a year was 1980 from a Jewish perspective?

If this were a less cynical and more believing age, we might be calling 1980 the year of the birth pangs of the Messiah. According to Jewish tradition, the dynamic movement of history is two-sided, combining destructive with constructive forces, with catastrophe serving as the background for the redemption. The transition from the present to the Messianic future is inevitable to be marked by upheaval and cataclysm, as a prelude to the establishment of the Messianic age of lasting peace.

Certainly 1980 has had its full share of the cataclysmic and the destructive - the heart breaking kidnapping of our 52 American hostages by Iranian fanatics; the tragic loss of lives through Soviet oppression of Afghanistan and in the Iraq - Iran conflict; the massacre of Catholic missionaries in El Salvador; the famine and starvation stalking 14 million refugees in Italy, Somalia, Asia and Haiti, the widespread violence, terrorism and crime. And for Jews there were the added anxieties of the rise of anti-Semitism here and abroad; the Russian crackdown on Jewish emigration; the verbal pogroms against Israel and the Jews at the UN.

But Jews also believe that "for every malady God prepares in advance the remedy." And signs of that remedy may well be seen in the growing unity of the American people to stand against the fanatics, the terrorists, and the bigots, to affirm with pride the virtues and liberties of American democracy in a repressive world, and to appreciate how crucial Israel's security is to the defense of those liberties. The election of President Reagan could well signal that we will enter the 1980s no longer drifting, but steering our Ship of State and our human destiny.

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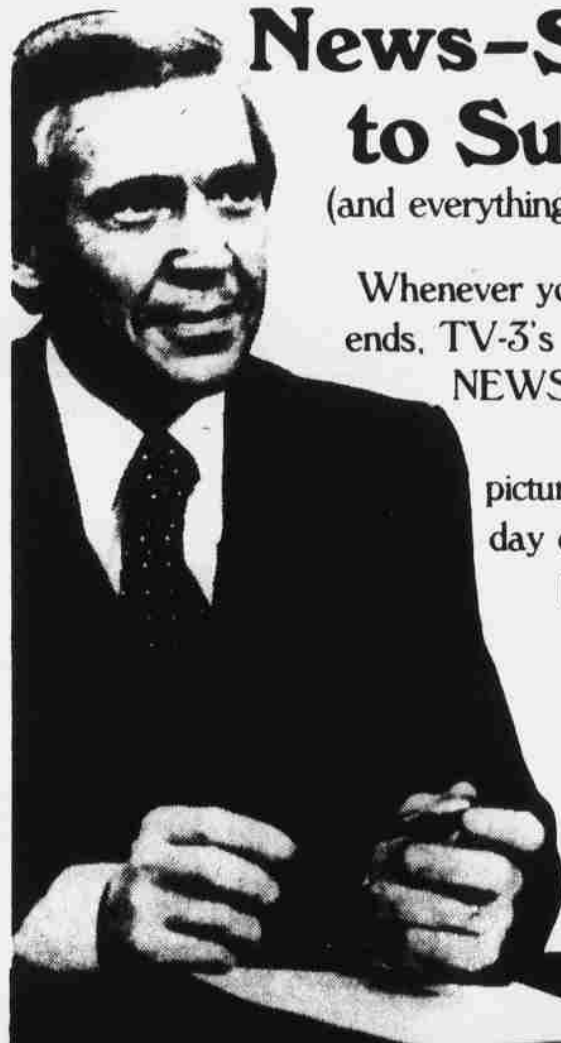
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