

Statement on Behalf of Worldwide Masorti/Conservative Movement Regarding Egalitarian Prayer at the Kotel Decision

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NEW YORK - Today marks an historic moment as the Israeli governing Cabinet has approved a proposal to create a permanent space for pluralistic and egalitarian prayer at the Kotel (Western Wall). This space will accommodate all forms of prayer and marks the first time that Israel has enacted a law in support of an egalitarian prayer space at a Jewish holy site, thus conveying official government legitimacy on religious streams other than Orthodoxy. Twenty-five years in the making, the decision brings us measurably closer to the simple, basic fact that there is more than one way to be Jewish and that there should be "One Wall for One People."

Under this proposal, Jews of all denominations will now have unrestricted access to the Southern Plaza as an egalitarian prayer space, presided over by a governing body comprised of the Chair of the Executive of the Jewish Agency, Women of the Wall and representatives from the Masorti (known as Conservative in North America) and Reform movements. The new space will be almost 900 square meters wide, and accessible through the same gate as the Northern Plaza, with equal visibility to the public. Much work regarding the implementation of this decision still remains and we look forward to the Government of Israel's swift action to begin construction and make this symbol of Jewish unity a reality.

The Masorti movement has been engaged in this battle for decades. In 2000, we reached a formal agreement with the Israeli government to oversee egalitarian prayer in the Southern Plaza, in the area known as Robinson's Arch. Since then, we have maintained regular prayer at the site, with no public funding, as a service to the Jewish people. More than 50,000 people attended prayers at the site last year, including thousands of Conservative Jews who visit annually to celebrate B'Nai Mitzvah and other special occasions; Noam, USY and Ramah teens who visit during their programs to Israel and students from the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem who pray there weekly.

Each of us has been deeply involved in negotiations for the past five years and is thrilled to witness our efforts resulting in recognition of the diversity and pluralistic nature of Jewish people, as well as the legitimacy of the Masorti and Reform religious streams. Together with our partners, the Jewish Federations of North America and the Union for Reform Judaism, we recognize and thank Anat Hoffman of Women of the Wall, whose dedication and commitment made this possible. We are also deeply appreciative of Jewish Agency for Israel Chairman Natan Sharansky, Israeli Cabinet Secretary Avichai Mandelblit and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

[Learn more](#) about the history of the Masorti movement at the Kotel.

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