

# The Kotel compromise: A time for rejoicing | Cover Story



*Rabbi Denise L. Eger*

The time for singing has come ...

It is a time for singing and rejoicing!

The historic vote by the Israeli Cabinet to create and fund an egalitarian prayer space at the Kotel, and the ongoing negotiations by the Reform movement in Israel and the United States are cause for celebration. We owe deep thanks to the leadership of Rabbi Gilad Kariv, head of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism; Anat Hoffman, executive director of the Israel Religious Action Center and chairwoman of Women of the Wall; Rabbi Rick Jacobs of the Union for Reform Judaism; and the Masorti and Conservative movements for seizing the day. Jerry Silverman and Becky Caspi of The Jewish Federations of North America; Lesley Sachs and Batya Kalish of Women of the Wall; and Rabbi Steve Wernick of United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism also worked closely with Cabinet Secretary Avichai Mandelblit and Jewish Agency head Natan Sharansky to bring this hope to fruition.

The negotiations are a victory even in compromise.

For the first time, the Israeli government recognized the authentic ritual and religious needs of those of us who believe in egalitarian prayer and women's equality. This is historic because the combined voices of intrafaith cooperation from the U.S. and Israeli liberal communities demanded the Israeli government acknowledge that the Jewish world in Israel and outside of Israel is diverse. There are many ways to be authentically Jewish.

In mid-February, the Central Conference of American Rabbis will hold its annual convention in Israel. While the construction and enlargement of the egalitarian space and new entrance to the Kotel will not have begun yet, I know my colleagues and I will rejoice in that space with Women of the Wall, and together we will lift our voices in prayer and song.

God is my strength and song and has become my salvation.

***Rabbi Denise L. Eger*** is the founding rabbi of Congregation Kol Ami, West Hollywood's Reform synagogue, and is the current president of the Reform movement's Central Conference of American Rabbis, the oldest and largest rabbinical organization in North America.