



Rabbis for Religious Freedom and Equality in Israel

January 2015; Shevat 5775

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Founded six years ago, Hiddush has become one of the leading organizations in Israel that is advocating for religious freedom and equality. Dedicated to these values and recognizing the important role rabbis play as communal leaders and change agents, we invite you to join with Hiddush in the creation of a rabbinic leadership network to turn these principles into reality. Rabbis for Religious Freedom and Equality in Israel (RRFEI) will represent a broad spectrum of Jewish belief and practice and will help to bring the message of religious freedom and equality to a wide swath of North American Jewry, while partnering with Hiddush to advocate for these values in Israel and the Diaspora.

Recognizing the important role rabbis play as communal leaders and change agents, RRFEI will (1) help mobilize the rabbinate, (2) advise Hiddush and help to shape and convey its message to the local, national and international Jewish community, and (3) help amass support for the cause beyond the rabbinate.

We hope you will agree to become an RRFEI founding member by taking these steps: (1) [click on our link \(http://tinyurl.com/rrfei-form\) to sign up as an RRFEI member and co-sign the letter announcing the formation of RRFEI](http://tinyurl.com/rrfei-form); (2) provide names of – and help us reach out to – colleagues whom you believe would be interested in receiving an invitation to join RRFEI. Of course, such an invitation will only be sent after your personal endorsement.

Prior to this past summer, Israel had begun to address many issues of religious freedom and diversity. New legislation was introduced to facilitate freedom of marriage and other human rights issues, particularly regarding the inclusion of women in every sector of society. Initiatives were underway to launch a new structure for conversion that would make it more accessible and the Supreme Court handed down landmark decisions declaring unconstitutional the continued mass exemption from military service and stopped governmental subsidies as they were based on mixing religion and politics rather than upholding religious freedom, gender and economic equality.

Hiddush took a leading role in much of that progress.

The momentum that has been building regarding issues of religious freedom and equality must continue. The coming elections on March 17, 2015 and the ensuing creation of a new governing coalition will be critical in deciding Israel's future direction. Depending on which parties and forces control the Knesset, the achievements that have begun toward religious freedom and equality might progress forward or could be rolled back or stopped altogether!

As our work proceeds, we will join with a growing network of organizations in Israel and North America that, recognizing the adverse impact of the current restrictive structures on all of world Jewry, are beginning to act on the issues of religious freedom. In the U.S. organizations such as



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the Jewish Federations of North America, the American Jewish Committee, the National Council of Jewish Women and local boards of rabbis are focusing on advancing freedom of marriage, in particular. Working closely with these organizations, Hiddush has been at the forefront of these efforts. Our rabbinical multi-denominational voice will greatly strengthen these endeavors.

Knowing that much of the groundwork has been laid, we also know that there is a great deal of work ahead of us. Reaching the goal of religious freedom depends on all of us to help stay the course.

לא עליך המלאכה לגמור ולא אתה בן חורין ליבטל ממנה

[Please click here \(http://tinyurl.com/rrfei-form\) to join us in this critical – and exciting – initiative.](http://tinyurl.com/rrfei-form)

We look forward to welcoming you.

Bivracha,

Conservative

Rabbi Prof. Elliot Dorff
Rabbi Debra Newman Kamin
Rabbi Prof. Gordon Tucker

Orthodox

Rabbi Prof. Michael Chernik
Rabbi Chaim Seidler-Feller

Reconstructionist

Rabbi Les Bronstein
Rabbi Jason Klein
Rabbi Prof. Debra Waxman

Reform

Rabbi Prof. David Ellenson
Rabbi Laura Geller

Renewal

Rabbi Dennis Beck-Berman
Rabbi Marcia Prager

[Denominations and names above in alphabetical order]

Organizer:

Rabbi Mark Levin

Organizer:

Rabbi Pam Frydman

Head of Hiddush:

Rabbi Uri Regev

Hiddush's Mission

Hiddush is committed to the advancement of “freedom of religion and conscience” and “full social and political equality without distinction on the basis of religion,” as promised in Israel’s Declaration of Independence. Hiddush believes that fully realizing the promise of religious freedom will strengthen Israel both as a democracy and as a Jewish state, and will bolster Jewish Peoplehood and Israel/Diaspora relationships.