



Rabbis for Religious Freedom & Equality in Israel



“The State of Israel... will guarantee freedom of religion and conscience...”
Israel's Declaration of Independence (May 1948)

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June 27, 2016
21 Sivan 5776

Dear Friends,

We very much appreciate your reading our newsletter weekly.

This week, we urge you to [CLICK HERE](#) to read the letter to Israel's Police

[Inspector General](#) Ronnie Alshich, from Attorneys Yizhar Hess, Executive Director of the Masorti Movement and Rabbi Gilad Kariv, Executive Director of the Reform Movement regarding insufficient protection of egalitarian worshippers from Haredi student protesters during the mincha (afternoon) service in the Main Kotel Plaza on June 16, 2016.

Due to vacation schedules, we will be taking a break until the second Monday in August. Have a wonderful summer, and we'll be in touch with more materials and editorials at that time.

Please visit us on our FB

Reform and Conservative Movements write to Police Inspector General

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THE PRIME MINISTER MUST RESPECT HIS AGREEMENTS -
By Rabbi Andrew Sacks,
Executive Director, Rabbinical Assembly in Israel



"When Rav Amar, the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, pushed his way into the egalitarian section by Robinson's Arch, he also spoke out about Conservative and Reform Jews being 'Reshai'im' (evil ones). Yet the Talmud defines a *Rasha* as one who says 'what is mine is mine and what is yours is mine.' Apparently this is the thinking of Rav Amar with regard to the Kotel. On January 31, 2016, the government signed an agreement with us regarding the egalitarian section. The government has failed to implement the agreement. So we are now demanding that if an egalitarian section is not created in keeping with the agreement, then we are entitled to a third prayer area in the main section of the Kotel. [What happened on June 16, 2016 in the Kotel Plaza sends a message to the Prime Minister that he must respect his agreements with us](#), that he cannot continue to deny us and give in to the Zealously Orthodox."

Photographs from the June 16, 2016 egalitarian mincha service at the Kotel

Click below for full sized photos

group [\[link\]](#), and send comments, suggestions and questions to:

organizers@rfeif.org.

Kol tuv,

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Resources

- [Western Wall prayer protest](#)
- [Supreme Court mikva'ot ruling](#)
- [Western Wall compromise agreement](#)
- [Chief Rabbi Lau attacks Bennett over pluralism](#)
- [J-REC / AJC Mission to Israel](#)
- [Giyur K'halacha](#)
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- [JFNA Israel Religious Expression Platform](#)
- [JPPI report: Jewish & Democratic](#)

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What is Yours is Also Mine

By: Rabbi Pamela Frydman, RRFEI Chair

[The government spent three years negotiating a Kotel compromise that includes building a dignified worship space at the Kotel \(Western Wall\) for mixed gender egalitarian prayer.](#)

Jerusalem's Sephardi Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar appears to view the Kotel compromise as a form of encroachment on Orthodox and Haredi turf and he is



fighting against it with all his might. Perhaps he is opposed to the compromise simply because it includes constructing a dignified egalitarian plaza. Perhaps it is because there will be one unified entrance through which tourist and regulars will enter the Kotel area and proceed to either egalitarian or gender divided prayer spaces. Perhaps it is because leaders of the Reform and Conservative Movements and Women of the Wall will have seats on a Kotel governing body. Perhaps it is for a combination of these and other reasons.

In February 2016, a month after the cabinet approved implementation of the Kotel compromise, Rabbi Amar gave an interview on Kol Hai radio during which he criticized aging

Haredi leaders for supporting the compromise. Rabbi Amar went so far as to imply that these Haredi leader lack intellectual competence.

In June 2016, Rabbi Amar stooped to a new low, desecrating the present egalitarian platform by using it to incite hatred against non-Orthodox observant Jews. On June 14, 2015, Rabbi Amar went to the platform with a group of supporters, installed a mehitzta and davvened shacharit. Then Rabbi Amar gave an emotional talk decrying Reform and Conservative Judaism in general and mixed gender worship and the Kotel compromise in particular. While making his way from the platform to the street, Rabbi Amar muttered a prayer asking God to bring these "evil ones" back to Judaism.

As we know, Mishna Avot (5:10) defines a "rasha" (evil one) as one who says "what is mine is mine and what is yours is mine." Oddly enough, Rav Amar declared Conservative and Reform Jews to be reshai'im at the very moment that he himself was engaging declaring "what is yours is mine" by taking over and inciting hatred in and from the egalitarian section at the Kotel.

[The Reform and Conservative Movements responded by holding an egalitarian mincha in the Main Plaza two days later, on June 16, 2016.](#) The egalitarian service was held in an open area behind the gender separated men's and women's prayer areas. Hundreds of Yeshiva students were sent by their rabbis to protest. The students protesters attacked and harassed the four hundred egalitarian worshipers by shouting, blowing shrill whistles continuously, cursing, spitting, and throwing water bottles.

A small number of border guards were stationed between the worshipers and the protestors. The guards became overwhelmed and did not protect the worshipers. To make matters worse, police stationed nearby looked on and did nothing.

For me, the saddest part of this entire affair is that Reform, Conservative and other egalitarian Jews were treated by police as a population unworthy of basic protections and yeshiva students were treated as though they are above the law. As if that were not enough, the government has been silent in the aftermath. As of this writing, there has been no apology and no promise by the Prime Minister, the Chief of Police or anyone else to do better in the future to protect

egalitarian worshipers at the Kotel and to inform Haredi protestors that harming worshipers and visitors to the Kotel is against the law. [**We call upon the Prime Minister and the Chief of Police to rectify this situation going forward.**](#)

Rabbis for Religious Freedom and Equality in Israel represents a broad spectrum of Jewish belief and practice, and champions the values of religious freedom and equality fundamental to World Jewry, in partnership with Hiddush for the realization of these principles in Israel and the Diaspora.

Rabbis for Religious Freedom and Equality in Israel

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