

The Kotel debacle

PAMELA FRYDMAN | JUNE 16, 2016, 9:28 AM |

By Rabbis Pamela Frydman and Stanley Davids

In just a few hours, Masorti/Conservative and Reform/Progressive leaders will gather in the large plaza behind the mehitzta divided prayer area at the Kotel for mincha, the afternoon service.

The service will take place at 5:00 PM Jerusalem time, 4:00 pm Continental Europe time, 10 AM U.S. Eastern time, 7 AM Pacific and [may be viewed here](#).

These are our sentiments about the events leading up to this mincha service:

We condemn in the strongest possible terms the desecration of the Kotel prayer space at Robinson's Arch by Jerusalem Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar for demonstrating that there is no room for egalitarian worship at the Kotel. We call upon Prime Minister Netanyahu and all responsible members of the coalition and opposition in the Knesset to condemn Rabbi Amar for desecrating the holy site by using his presence to instill hatred toward other Jews and to prevent Rabbi Amar from continuing such desecration.

We support the right of all Jews to pray, each in their way, according to their custom and understanding. We support the right of the Reform/Progressive and Conservative/Masorti Movements and all other Movements and prayer communities that wish to pray with men and women together. We equally support the right of Orthodox and Haredi Jews, Women of the Wall and all Jewish communities that wish to pray with the separation of men and women.

We stand in solidarity with our Masorti and Reform colleagues in Israel as they gather on Thursday June 16th for mincha in the Main Kotel Plaza.

We call upon Israeli security forces to move competently to prevent any threats of violence against this act of worship and political consciousness raising. We also invite everyone to witness this mixed gender worship through

The prophet Isaiah heard God cry out: "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" Isaiah said, "Here am I. Send me." While we believe that Thursday's egalitarian mincha service in the Main Kotel Plaza is a fully justifiable act of civil disobedience and consciousness raising, we know that this worship service will not resolve the critically important issues surrounding religious equality and freedom in Israel.

We pray, however, that this public expression of outrage, carried out in a calm and respectful manner, can help to restore civility, democracy and integrity at one of Judaism's most sacred sites.

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Rabbi Stanley Davids is a past-Chair of the Association of Reform Zionists of America and has served on the Board of Governors of the Jewish Agency and on the Executive of the World Zionist Organization.

Rabbi Pamela Frydman Chairs the Executive Committee of Rabbis for Religious Freedom and Equality in Israel. She was co-founder and former International Co-Chair of Rabbis for Women of the Wall.

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