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## 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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### Introduction

October 1, 2016  
28 Elul, 5776

Dear Friends,

*L'shanah tovah tikateyvu v'teihateimu.* May each of us be inscribed and sealed in the Book of Life.

Israel remembers a fallen leader, Shimon Peres, who devoted his life to independence and justice first for the Jewish people but also for Israel's neighbors and the world. Peres was a man of vision; and though some may disagree with the stands he took on a range of topics, there's no doubt he gave his life to the service of a cause dear to us all and greater than any single person.

Our common goal, like Shimon Peres', is a State of Israel that is democratic and Jewish;

### In memory of President Shimon Peres z"l

RRFEI lovingly remembers President Shimon Peres z"l (1923-2016), a true Israeli hero and champion of civil rights.



President Shimon Peres z"l,  
Photo: Hadas Parush, Flash 90

#### ***Let us take a moment to reflect upon some of President Peres' words of wisdom:***

- *"We must allow women to wrap themselves in prayer shawls at the Western Wall."*
- *"A homosexual person is also a person... We cannot take the right to family away from them."*
- *"I urge the members of the ultra-Orthodox population to increase their participation in Israel's workforce."*
- *"We must not let our public spaces be perceived of as areas of unchecked discrimination... No man has the*

a homeland for all of the Jewish people in which all forms of Judaism may also thrive without State interference.

We include this week Rabbi David Stav's article in Times of Israel in which he claims that the Rabbanut has given up the pretense of appearing to represent anyone other than themselves and those who follow their system of Judaism as legitimate Jews. This, of course, follows the rabbanut's refusal to recognize the conversions of the leader of the RCA's beit din for conversions in the U.S., Rabbi Gedalia Dov Schwartz.

In addition we have included a Hebrew article relating to Hiddush's defense of Israeli soldiers who choose to wear impermissible beards in the IDF.

This is simply an example of the class of cultures, which Prof. Ruth Gavison and Rabbi Yaacov Medan attempted to resolve in the Gavison-Medan Covenant of 2004. if you are speaking about the clash of cultures in Israel, and the attempt to

*authority to force a woman to sit where he would prefer."*

## The Gavison-Medan Covenant

### The framework for coexistence between dati and hiloni Jews in Israel

[Click HERE for the Gavison-Medan Covenant: Main Points and Principles](#)

The principles demonstrate that it is possible to arrive at a single joint proposal without contradicting the tenets of our divergent beliefs: the Torah and Jewish law on the one hand, and the centrality of the principles of equality and human dignity and liberty on the other

#### Following are the proposals in concise format:

- **Right of Return:** Every “child of the Jewish people” will be eligible to immigrate to Israel, including the child of a Jewish father and a person who has converted through a recognized procedure. Even someone who converted in a manner that diverges from the tradition of the “Shulhan Arukh” will be entitled to register himself as a Jew in the population registry.
- **Personal Status:** The right to establish a family will be recognized. The law of the state will permit weddings conducted according to any ceremony the couple chooses, and the marriage will be recorded in the population registry. No individual in Israel will be allowed to marry who is not single both according to state law and according to a strict interpretation of the laws of his religion.
- **The Sabbath:** Saturday is the official day of rest in Israel. Citizens will not be employed and will not be required to work in manufacturing, trade or services on the Sabbath. Cultural events, entertainment and a reduced schedule of public transportation will be permitted in accordance with demand.
- **Principle of Non-Coercion:** This refers to the elimination of any monopoly exercised by a particular group on overall arrangements; at the same time, the right of every group to preserve its own lifestyle

build a single Jewish state that is both democratic and Jewish, you might find the principles and their development both interesting and helpful.

May the coming year bring health, happiness, peace and fulfillment to the Beit Yisrael.

Mark

Rabbi Mark H. Levin  
RRFEI Editor in Chief

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## Resources

- [Vision of Hiddush and Rabbis for Religious Freedom](#)
- [Hiddush resources](#)
- [Courts - religious & secular](#)
- [Conversion](#)
- [Death & burial - ancient & now](#)
- [Diaspora-Israel](#)
- [Diversity & inclusivity among Jews](#)
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according to its own conception and interpretation will be respected. The same will hold true in matters of burial, dietary laws, the Sabbath, religious services and prayer arrangements at the Western Wall.

- **Legal Implementation:** The covenant will be anchored in law such that it will be difficult to introduce partial and unilateral changes into its mechanisms. It is in the spirit of the covenant as a whole to give preference to mechanisms for negotiation and compromise over legislative and judicial decision-making. The courts, therefore, will not be granted the authority to invalidate laws concerning the covenant. The interpretation of the covenant, insofar as there is no court case involved, will be entrusted to an accepted representative public body, in order to encourage consensual interpretation without the need for recourse through the courts.

## A message to the RCA: Join us and raise your voice

Rabbi David Stav, *The Times of Israel* blogs, Sept. 25, 2016

[Click HERE for the full article](#)

The most recent uproar against disgraceful action by Israel's Chief Rabbinate surrounds their reported unwillingness to recognize halachic conversions approved by Rabbi Gedalia Dov Schwartz of the Rabbinical Court of the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA).

As disturbing and disappointing as this story is, it is only the latest in a series of similar actions by the Chief Rabbinate.

But we would be making a serious mistake if we were to dismiss this decision as in any way linked to the Rabbinate trying to impose a stricter interpretation of halacha.

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**מפתיע: גם בעמותת חדו"ש קוראים לבחון מחדש את  
נהלי הזקן**

משה ויסטוך, כיפה, Sept. 26, 2016

- [Shabbat transportation for poor & inform](#)
- [Western Wall](#)
- [Women](#)

[Click HERE for the full article](#)

עמותת חדו"ש לחופש דת ושוויון פנתה לרמטכ"ל רא"ל גדי איזנקוט בקריאה לבחון מחדש את נהלי פטור הזקן. זאת לאחר שהועלו לאחרונה מספר תלונות על מקרים בהם לכאורה נמנע מחיילים דתיים לגדל זקן, ואף ננקטו צעדים משמעותיים כנגד חיילים אלה אחרי שבקשתם לגדל זקן לא אושרה על ידי שלטונות צה"ל.

## Contact us

email: [organizers@rrfei.org](mailto:organizers@rrfei.org)

Phone (US): [646-334-5636](tel:646-334-5636)

Phone (Isr): [054-779-1179](tel:054-779-1179)

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במכתב, הממוען גם לראש אכ"א האלוף חגי טופולנסקי, מציינים בעמותה כי הנוהל החדש מחמיר עם אלה הרוצים לגדל זקן. "על פי פרסומים בתקשורת, מתבטא השינוי בפקודה בכך שאישור לגדל זקן מטעמי דת או מטעמים אחרים - שבעבר ניתן באישור מפקדו הישיר של החייל בדרגת סא"ל - דורש היום אישור נוסף מטעם שלישי היחידה, כאשר לעתים מדובר בקצין בכיר, בדרגת אל"מ, אשר אינו מכיר כלל את החייל ואשר מן הסתם יש בפניו נושאים בוערים יותר. עוד התברר כי כתוצאה מכך, במקרים מסוימים מתעורר קושי אמיתי לקבל את אישור השלישי. העובדה שהפקודה לא התפרסמה ברבים מוסיפה על העמימות והחשש לחוסר עקביות וחוסר התחשבות ורגישות מספקת לצרכי החיילים".

במכתב קוראת חדו"ש לצה"ל להתערב בנושא ולערוך בחינה מערכתית דחופה בדבר האופן שבו מתנהל נוהל אישור הזקן לחיילי צה"ל ביחס לחיילים בשטח ולבחון האם אין צורך לשנות ולעדכן נהלים על מנת למנוע פגיעה בחיילים.

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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

Website: [WWW.RRFEI.ORG](http://WWW.RRFEI.ORG) | Email: [organizers@rrfei.org](mailto:organizers@rrfei.org) | Tel. [US] [646-334-5636](tel:646-334-5636); [Israel] [054-779-1179](tel:054-779-1179)

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Freedom of Religion for Israel  
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US

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