



Israel Movement for Reform
and Progressive Judaism

התנועה הרפורמית יהדות מתקדמת בישראל

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Highlights from 2018-19

The Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism is delighted to share our activity and expansion over the last two years. In the past decade IMPJ has succeeded in doubling the amount of Reform congregations throughout the nation to 52 in total. We have ordained over 100 Reform Israeli Rabbis through the Hebrew Union College Rabbinic studies program in Jerusalem. We have operated a growing chain of progressive pre-schools and elementary schools, and we have integrated educational, progressive programs into more than 100 public schools throughout the country.

Our Movement is highly invested in informal education, pre-army leadership programs and youth programming, bringing justice-oriented pluralistic Judaism to present-day Israel on a local level. Despite the fact that the Israeli government does not recognize marriage through our rabbis, thousands of couples choose to celebrate their weddings through the Reform movement, joining thousands more Reform-spirited Britot, Bnei Mitzvah and burial ceremonies. Through our congregational partnerships, 50 Israeli Reform congregations have formed ongoing relationships with hundreds of Reform congregations from around the world. The Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC) – IMPJ's legal and public arm - has become one of Israel's leading organizations on the scene of social activism and Tikkun Olam.

Recent academic studies by the Jewish Peoplehood Policy Institute (JPPI) as well as others, reveal that today 13% of Israelis identify themselves as Reform or Conservative Jews (8% Reform, 5% Conservative) - more than double in comparison to a decade ago. The vast majority of these are Israeli born "Sabras". Moreover, according to these studies, in the last three years more than 40% of Israeli Jews have attended an egalitarian Jewish service, life cycle celebration or Jewish holiday event led by a Reform or Conservative rabbi.

This is important because it means that despite the familiar challenges for the Reform Movement in Israel, over half a million Israelis actively identify with Reform



Research in 2018 by
the JPPI shows that
over 800,000
Israelis identify as
progressive Jews.

Judaism and thousands more turn to Reform rabbis and congregations when celebrating Jewish life cycle events. This proves the immense potential that we have among the secular and traditional Israeli audiences, who constitute a total of 3.5 million people in Israel!



Just last week, seven rabbis were newly ordained at HUC-JIR in Jerusalem: Binyamin Minich, David Barak-Gorodetsky, Devorah Shoua-Haim, Olya Weinstein, Mordechai Li-Dar, Dahlia Shaham and Shlomo Yehuda Zagman. Five of these rabbis are already working within IMPJ congregations, leading veteran congregations, pioneering new initiatives along Israel's borders and in various peripheries.

David leads research on progressive streams of Judaism in partnership with Ben Gurion University. Dahlia has conducted life-cycle celebrations, musical Beit Midrash and interfaith events. And after years of service there, Binyamin is now the rabbi of Shirat Ha-Yam Carmel congregation for immigrants from the FSU.

These Rabbis embody the essence of the work of the IMPJ: spreading pluralistic Judaism throughout the length and breadth of Israel. We are so excited to be bringing fresh talent to new towns and cities, and can already see much growth!

The Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC)



**IRAC
advocating
religious
freedom at the
Western Wall**

IRAC is the public and legal advocacy arm of the Reform Movement in Israel, and operates as the leading Jewish organization advocating civil and human rights, issues of religion and state, and defending the freedoms of conscience, faith and religion in Israel. IRAC has achieved many victories these past two years, from suing Orthodox radio station Kol BaRama who banned female voices from broadcast; to advancing religious freedom through public transportation on Shabbat in Israel's central region.

IRAC's latest achievement is the recent indictment of Benzi Gopstein, head of racist anti-assimilation group Lehava, based on incitement to violence, racism and terror, and for expressing support for the 1994 massacre at Hebron's Cave of the Patriarchs by Baruch Goldstein. This news follows an eight year fight led by IRAC to hold Gopstein accountable for his actions. IRAC's success in filing the petition and collecting evidence led to the arrest of Gopstein and fourteen of his followers, who were charged with incitement to terrorism, violence, racism and obstruction of justice. Thanks to these efforts, we are finally beginning to see the Israeli police and the Attorney General take action against this dangerous organization.

We would like to take this opportunity to say a special thank you to the WUPJ, for being a pillar of support to the Israeli Movement and for continuous friendship and guidance. May we merit to work together for many years to come.