



# MASORTI MATTERS: HOW MERCAZ-CANADA & THE MASORTI FOUNDATION MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN ISRAEL

## ONE SMALL STEP, BUT A GIANT LEAP

I expect you have heard the news about the agreement last week in Israel to provide government funding for a small number of non-Orthodox rabbis. A limited step, but nonetheless an important and historic one.

At this [link](#), you will find a television report (in Hebrew) that features interviews with Rabbi Mauricio Balter, president of the Rabbinical Assembly of Israel and leader of the Masorti kehilla in Beersheva, and Dr. Irit Zmora, former chair of Masorti in Israel and a leader in our Beersheva kehilla.

Some background: the agreement with the government came days before an expected Supreme Court decision in a case initiated by the Reform movement about seven years ago. The Court had clearly signaled that absent some agreement, the decision it would render would support our position.

From the outset, Masorti and Reform have jointly worked on strategy. While the immediate agreement deals only with rabbis in farming communities and regional councils, that must not minimize its psychological and precedential importance. However, since the bulk of both Masorti and Reform communities are in larger, more urban settings, most of our locations will not see any immediate benefit.

As of this writing, we do not know the rules and standards the government intends to apply regarding this limited funding, nor the amount of assistance it will propose. We do know the funding will not come from the Ministry of Religious Affairs but from the Cultural and Sports Ministry, so the threat by MK Yakov Margi, head of Religious Affairs, to resign if he had to fund non-Orthodox rabbis was a bit of theatrical posturing.

In this area of mutual benefit Masorti will continue to work closely with the Reform movement in Israel. We are cooperating on strategy to get this initiative expanded to larger municipal areas. We understand not to expect rapid progress.

Masorti's growth (63 kehillot, 8 of them in the last two years) and its position in the forefront on important issues mean Israeli leadership is beginning to pay attention to religious pluralism, but we suffer enormously from the funding disparity (\$450 million, or more, of government aid to Orthodox groups and about \$50,000 for Masorti). We need your help to encourage contributions so that we continue the fight for pluralism and democratic values.

Please support the work of Masorti in Israel by making a donation online at <http://www.masorti.ca/donate.html> or by mail to Canadian Foundation for Masorti Judaism, 1000 Finch Avenue West, Suite 508, Toronto, ON M3J 2V5.

Your membership in MERCAZ-Canada, combined with others around the world, also helps ensure funding for Masorti/Conservative synagogues and programs throughout Israel and the world from the World Jewish Organization (WZO) and the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI).

Sincerely,  
Rabbi Jennifer Gorman, Executive Director

**Help us assure the future for a democratic and pluralistic Jewish State  
by joining MERCAZ-Canada and supporting the Masorti Foundation.**

To donate online, visit <http://www.masorti.ca/donate.html> today.

Keep our voice strong in the WZO & Jewish Agency, join MERCAZ-Canada <http://www.mercaz.ca/>



**MERCAZ-Canada ~ Your Voice in Israel**  
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For more information about Masorti/Conservative Judaism in Israel  
Contact Rabbi Jennifer Gorman, Executive Director

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