



Report of the Hindu-Jewish Leadership Summit

**February 5-7 2007
New Delhi, India**

**An initiative of the
World Council of Religious
Leaders**

**In Partnership with
The Chief Rabbinate of Israel
and
The Hindu Dharma
Acharya Sabha**

**Hosted by All India Movement for
Seva**





WORLD COUNCIL OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF THE MILLENNIUM WORLD PEACE SUMMIT

WCORL Religion One on One – Jewish Hindu Initiative

The World Council of Religious Leaders (WCORL) proposes to engage the World's Religious Leaders from every major Religion in an effort to build greater understanding and cooperation amongst The Religious Traditions. The entire program is strictly non-political and this series will extend to each of The Major Religions.

WCORL recognizes the significance of the shared values and views of the World's Great Religious Traditions. The Secretary-General of WCORL has launched an initiative "Religion One on One", in order to bring the collective wisdom to bear on actively promoting harmony in these troubled times.

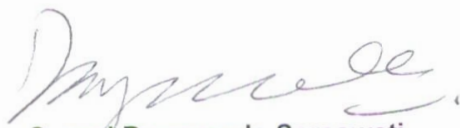
The first in this series is the Hindu – Jewish Leadership Summit, engaging two of the World's oldest faiths – Hindus and Jews. This is an initiative in partnership with "The Chief Rabbinate of Israel" and "The Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha" representing the Jewish and Hindu Religious Leaders.

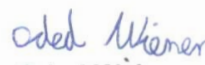
The first Hindu-Jewish Leadership Summit was convened in New Delhi, India on 5-6 February 2007.

Amongst the outcomes was the creation of a

- Standing Committee on Hindu – Jewish Relations.
- A Hindu-Jewish Scholars Group.

As this is a WCORL ongoing program, future initiatives and follow up will be through a process of Mutual Consultation facilitated by The Secretary General of WCORL.


Swami Dayananda Saraswati
Convener
Hindu Dharma Acharyas Sabha


Dr. Oded Wiener
Director General
Chief Rabbinate



Bawa Jain
Secretary General
World Council of Religious Leaders

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Hindu-Jewish Leadership Summit

An Initiative of The World Council of Religious Leaders

Background

In 2003, following the 3 L initiative (Look, Listen and Learn) of The World Council of Religious Leaders, during one of my visits to Mr. Oded Wiener, Director General of The Chief Rabbinate of Israel, I approached him to enquire about the various dialogues the Chief Rabbinate was engaged in. He shared with me the ongoing dialogues with the Abrahamic religions and helped me understand how they were conceived. I studied them deeply and was amazed at the rapid progress the Jews had been able to make in a very short time with the Abrahamic religions. It was then that I conceived the idea of bringing together the two World's Oldest Religions the Hindus and the Jews.

Thereafter I approached Swami Dayananda Saraswati, the Convener of The Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha and Co-Chair of our Board. I was very well aware of his passion for the Jews. He immediately realized the value and prospects of this and was very spontaneous in his commitment to realize this vision. As he said, "We have a lot in common, our problems and our values; we share a similar destiny".

I then engaged in extensive consultations, discussed with the Leadership of WCORL, and identified the partners - The Chief Rabbinate of Israel and The Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha. It took three years of persistence, dedication and a lot of hard work to launch The First Hindu – Jewish Leadership Summit.

Thus was born the "Religion One on One" Initiative of The World Council of Religious Leaders.

The World Council of Religious Leaders recognizes the significance of the shared values and views of the two oldest living religious traditions in the world, the Hindu tradition and the Jewish tradition. It has therefore initiated this dialogue between these two great traditions; in order to bring their collective wisdom to bear on actively promoting harmony in these troubled times.

A Broad Outline of the Dialogue

The Hindu religion has a long history of accommodating other religious traditions without a patronizing attitude. It is a living ancient tradition with a view and way of life. Judaism also has a long tradition with a great commitment to a view and way of life. We find that there are many common customs and manners in these two great traditions. The current attempt is to bring learned Hindu leaders, living a monastic life, to dialogue with the learned Jewish Rabbis from Israel, headed by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. In this open dialogue, which we will have in Delhi, we can exchange and learn from each other's spiritual knowledge and religious tenets. We will also explore spiritual practices in both traditions. This initiative is becoming increasingly important as India and Israel continue to take steps to strengthen their relationship, a relationship that has the potential to affect global politics by altering the balance of power in Asia.

There is understandably a growing interest in Hindu-Jewish dialogue in both the respective communities and the academy. In March 2005 in London, a historic formal meeting of the Chief Rabbi of London and the Secretary General of the Hindu Forum of Britain took place. On that occasion, Chief Rabbi Jonathon Sacks said, "We both honor our past while living in the present. We both seek to honor our traditions while contributing as members of British society. We both cherish our communities, our families and our children. We both think we have something more special than the individualism and consumerism of contemporary culture. We have much in common. We also have many things that are different between us. And what we have in common, unites us, and what we have different enriches us."



In 2004, Oxford University's



Institute for Hindu Studies hosted a Hindu-Jewish seminar, and for several years, the American Academy of Religion has had a Comparative Studies in Hinduism and Judaism's Unit to discuss topics in an alternative paradigm to the Protestant-based models that tend to dominate the academic study of religion. As Professor Nathan Katz notes, "While interreligious dialogue has been a 'tool for evangelization' in the hands of Christian missionaries, when Jews and Hindus converse, there are no ulterior motives."



The proposed Hindu-Jewish Dialogue would explore the following crucial areas:

1. The relevance of the central teachings of the scriptures of each tradition for contemporary society.
2. The common ground and differences in religious practices, values, social traditions, dietary and other laws of conduct (âcâra).
3. Ways of preserving religious culture in the face of an increasing global influence and modernization.
4. The shared value for a strong secular education and seek ways to enhance educational opportunities for the current generation.
5. Ways to foster an atmosphere of mutual respect and amity, acknowledging that humanity is one family with a moral responsibility for one another, and that an awareness of this reality leads to the religious and moral duty to promote human rights and dignity in the modern world and provide a genuine vision for a just society.
6. Our collective responsibility to the environment and world peace, given that we live in a global society of unparalleled technological and scientific advances, so that we can use these advances constructively for global edification in keeping with our shared religious and moral aspirations.
7. Beneficial ways of responding to the challenge of the role of religion in contemporary society by providing living examples of justice, compassion and humility in keeping with our sacred teachings.
8. The dissemination of religious education that offers hope and direction for living in harmony in our complex modern times, with religious leaders and educators having a special duty to instruct their communities to pursue harmonious living for the well-being of society at large.
9. Ways of relieving the pain and sorrow of all who suffer, throughout the world, offering our prayers for an end to the suffering that afflicts all living beings, and seeking ways to maximize and expand our relief efforts.

As a result of the consultations engaged in during the year, it has been mutually agreed to focus on the following subjects and areas;

- **Contemporary challenges to religion, both scientific and social**
- **Religious positions on questions of ecology**
- **Religious educational needs in contemporary society**
- **Morality in a world of relativistic thought**
- **Respectful relationships between differing faith groups and the parameters of legitimation for opposing worldviews.**

The Broad areas are briefly outlined here below:

Mutual Education:

This will lay a strong foundation to build our own understanding of each others Religion and foster greater Knowledge and Respect. Please refer to each of your Calendars and develop a clear and concise statement about each of your respective Religious Observances, their Background, Customs, Significance and Relevance. To further understanding and build respect for each others Sacred Days, please develop adequate materials to widely circulate and disseminate information.

Social and Contemporary Issues:

Please look into each of your Religions and identify the Social and Contemporary Issues which you would most like to bring up. Please then go on to develop the perspective based on your Religion with the relevant references to your Scriptures and Sacred texts. It might be interesting to explore their relevance as it relates to society today.

Theological and Philosophical Issues:

This will be complex, but it is suggested that each side begin to think about the subjects you would like to address. It will be critical to engage and build consensus among the sub sects of your respective Religions – as far as possible – on the diverse subjects and view points. We may engage on this at a later date. It is proposed that we may discuss this at our upcoming meeting in Israel, February 18-20, 2008.



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**Messages of Blessing
from
Their Holinesses
The Shankaracharyas**



***His Holiness Jagadguru Sri
Swami Svarupananda
Saraswatiji Shankaracharya
of Jyotir Math***

Since I am not keeping well, I am unable to attend this historic meet. However, I take this wonderful opportunity to wish this conference a splendid success, and also pray that it leads to other such meetings not only in India, but also in Israel. Since both the Hindu and Jewish communities have a lot in common, we need to discover and nurture these areas for the benefit of millions of people. After all, we are the followers of dharma. No matter in which corner of the earth it might have originated, religion comes directly from God. The main purpose of religion is to enhance our lives, and uplift our personalities from succumbing to animalistic tendencies. My blessings are with you.

***His Holiness
Jagadguru Swami
Jayendra Saraswatiji
Sri Shankaracharya of
Kanchi Kamakoti
Pitham***

It is very essential that every human being should feel proud of one's country of birth and one's own religion. As a shining example of this, we have the people of the ancient Judaic faith who are proud of their homeland, and who are very devoted to the practice of their faith. We had committed to attending the Hindu-Jewish Dialogue. However due to ill health and unavoidable circumstances, we could not be physically present at the venue. Our prayers and blessings are with you for the success of the conference, in reinforcing the feeling of pride for one's religion and country, and for a deep bond between the followers of Hinduism and Judaism to develop as a result of this historic Hindu-Jewish Dialogue.

***His Holiness Jagadguru
Swami Vidya Narasimha
Bharatiji, Sri
Sankaracharya of
Pushpagiri Math***

Although I am unable to be physically present at this great historic Hindu-Jewish Summit, my heart is very much with you all today. The Pushpagiri ahasamsthanam is fully with you, and is committed to doing whatever we need to do to move our relationship forward after the conference. I heartily congratulate Swami Dayanandaji Maharaj for making this Dialogue a reality. But for his Herculean efforts and great vision, this Summit could not have taken place. I do believe that, together, the Jewish and the Hindu leaders alone can ensure that global peace is more than just a vision. I pray for the resounding success of this conference, and also for a strong bond to develop between the leaders of the two religions. My blessings are with you.

Messages of Blessing from Their Holinesses The Shankaracharyas

His Holiness Sri Pramukh Swamiji Maharaj, Swami Narayan Sanstha, Akshardham

I send my Pranams to all the honored Dharmacharyas, Mathadhipatis, Mahamandaleswars, and our learned Jewish guests from Belgium, Spain, and Israel headed by the Chief Rabbi. It gives us immense pleasure to know that the first Hindu-Jewish Leadership Summit is being held in New Delhi. These are the two of the world's most ancient religious traditions that have remained non-proselytizing, while still inspiring their followers through their philosophies. Putting into practice the teaching that the entire earth must be looked upon as one family, India has not only not persecuted the Jews, but we Indians have welcomed and embraced the Jews in the past. We promise to extend our help to your community in the future as well. By reaffirming the best in our faiths, let us pledge to guide ourselves, and our followers, not only to tolerate each other, but to coexist peacefully helping each other with joy and mutual respect. The value of

any tradition lies not in the quantity of its followers, but in the spirituality of its adherents, which is a better indicator of its growth than the horizontal spread of the faith. If the followers demonstrate a change in their day-today behavior by becoming more caring and respectful to those fellow beings that practice other faiths, then religion would have fulfilled its purpose. The world would become a more hospitable place to live. Let us come together, and discover in this meet, areas of common concern and cooperation between Hinduism and Judaism. I am not able to attend this summit due to ill health, but I am sending a representative instead, and wish the summit great success in its noble endeavor.



His Holiness, Acharya Sri Sri Ravi Shankarji, Art of Living

I offer my Pranams to the respected delegation of the Jewish community, the learned Rabbis, and the esteemed Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha Swamijis. Both our civilizations have been the targets of terrorism. Both have been persecuted for many centuries. Our two communities have many common concerns. We are both victims of proselytization and mass conversion programs of our people, and yet both our

communities do not convert people from other faiths. Unlike the Hindus, the Jewish community is more organized, and has made its presence felt, and its voice heard worldwide. Hindus can learn from this proactive behavior.

Time and again, the Hindus have demonstrated the power of non-violence as a force of social change. This is perhaps something to consider in-depth. Another concern is press representation. Sometimes Hindus and Hinduism are represented in the media in very bad taste, raking up sensitive issues, with intent to malign the reputation of the Hindus, and attempting to divide the community by derogatory remarks. Our Jewish friends can help in countering the distortions of Hinduism by vested interests in other parts of the world. We hear that even some of the books of the sixth and seventh grades in the west have derogatory references to our culture. There is a tendency to label all Hindus as "right wing". These are some concerns that we can work together to explore. I offer my congratulations to the organizers, and my best wishes for the success of the meeting.



Words of Wisdom and Blessing

***His Holiness Sri Swami
Vishveshvaratirthaji Ashtamatha, Udipi,
Karnataka***



It is really a great achievement that has brought together the leadership of the two most ancient traditions. It is my hope that this meeting will lead to unity, to the dissemination of moral values, and to a greater awareness of God. We have many things in common, most important of which is the belief in one God, who is the creator and sustainer of the universe. The Hindu tradition is seen to be polytheistic. But this is not true. The Veda says “Eko devah sarvabhuteshu gudhah”. There is only one creator, whose truth is hidden in all beings. The name and form of God is not in question; God is all-pervasive. To follow the mandates of God, leading our lives in keeping with moral codes is the practice of both our traditions.

We have to unite and work together in the international realm. We must focus on peaceful coexistence in the political, and in the spiritual worlds. Both traditions have a long history of surviving many invasions and aggressive onslaughts, but we have emerged with our spirits and determination unscathed. We pray for the success of the summit.

***His Holiness
Sri Swami Balagangadharanathaji
Adichunchunagiri Matha, Karnataka***

Both Hindus and Jews have the same source. We have to celebrate our greatness, and discover areas of cooperation. This is an historic moment to share the treasures of the messages of our dharma. Even as we celebrate our traditions, we have the serious task of sharing it with the people around us. In the midst of disbelief, and politicization of religions, how do we inspire people around us to follow dharma? That is a question to discuss at length. We are the worshippers of nature as God. We have the same concept of God in both our traditions, and we have the task of transmitting this to the future traditions. Loving kindness and compassion are practices that both the Jewish and Hindu traditions emphasize.

As we commence this great summit, we pray for its success. May we come together in compassion and humility; may we listen to and learn from each other well.

Om shantih shantih shantih!



***His Holiness Sri La Sri Nachiappa Swamigal
Koviloor Vedanta Matham, Koviloor***



I belong to an ancient tradition that trains teachers in Vedanta --the highest scriptures of the Hindu religion-- in Tamil, a regional language from South India. Our religion has always been hospitable and welcoming to people of all faiths; even if they were inimical to us, we made sure to welcome them. This is an important aspect of the tradition that is retained even to this day.

In this spirit, we extend a warm welcome to our guests. We have much to share and learn together. We need to discuss how we can transmit the best of our values to the younger generation. The task seems onerous, and nearly impossible. I know one person who can make this happen. This meet could not have been possible without the leadership of Swami Dayanandaji. He has been able to mobilize all the Swamis of India, who have come together because of him. Swami Dayanandaji is the only one who can put India on a spiritual pedestal, bring order and dharma back into the world. I follow him, and will give him all my help during my lifetime. I seek everyone's cooperation with this beautiful mission.

***His Holiness Sri Swami Chidananda
Muniji Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh***

I am very happy to be here today. It is an historic moment, and a great beginning. Just the fact that the Jewish leaders are here shows your commitment and enthusiasm. Even just sitting here together is sending a message to the world that if the leaders are ready to take a step, the followers are not far behind.

The people have forgotten the basic values of understanding, peace, and respect. You have to show the path to the people, for even in a single family, if there is no agreement, what to talk of the world? Dialogue is the only way to be together and live together today. Coming together is a beginning, but working together is progress, and sharing together is a blessing, and I see the blessing today.

People today are looking not for the path of pieces, but the path of peace. The path of peace is there only when we are able to live in peace. The Jews and the Hindus represent two peace-loving communities, and I can see that this dialogue is going to go far. The same God is invoked by the wise in many forms and many names, and worshipped in many ways. This is the message that needs to be given to the world.

Thank you. Om Shantih!



INAUGURAL SESSION

Opening Remarks

*Mr. Bawa Jain, Secretary General,
World Council of Religious Leaders*

“The problem, often, is not with the faith, but with the faithful.”

Kofi Annan



I want to begin with Pranams to my Acharyas, and Shalom to my Jewish Leaders, especially the Chief Rabbi. Thank you for coming to this historic Summit. I was reflecting this morning on what is common between the two traditions, especially when I say “Shalom” as Shal-Om. When I break it up, it contains the Sanskrit word, “Om,” which is a sacred form of Hindu greeting. You can already see that even in this mode of greeting, the two traditions are intertwined. It is obvious that there is a lot to learn from sharing about the commonalities and differences between the world’s two oldest religions.

I want to welcome you first of all on behalf of the World Council of Religious Leaders (WCORL). Many of you were present at the historic Millennium Peace Summit, which for the first time in history brought together over 1200 eminent Religious Leaders from over 120 Countries, representing every major religion, to The United Nations. This Summit gave birth to the WCORL – a Council which seeks to harness the power of Religion to build an integrated framework for Peace.

When we look around the world today, we see growing intolerance, and exacerbation of conflict in the name of religion. Yet, it is religions that must come together if we are to have Peace in the World. I ask that you condemn violence in the name of religion in the strongest terms. You have the moral authority, you exert influence over the masses, and to have a cessation of hostilities, and an end of the cycle of violence and conflict, I believe that only our religious leaders can bring that about. WCORL is committed to ending religious violence through convening initiatives such as this one, where we

assemble to learn from each other, and to make resolutions that foster harmony, respect and understanding in the world.

Regardless of our beliefs and practices, we are all human beings. There is no difference. No matter who the victim of religious violence is, I request you all, as stalwart religious leaders of the world, to help us by condemning all forms of religious violence. As religious leaders of two of the oldest religions, you not only have substantial presence in the world, but also are endowed with the moral authority to lead humanity out of the chaos in which it finds itself.

As a first step in this initiative, I want to be modest in our expectations of what we can realistically accomplish. The point is to learn from each other, to learn about each other, seeking commonalities in terms of our traditions and values. After this Summit, we would like to take the Hindu religious leadership to Israel. This is part of our plan, so that the Israelis can witness the Hindu leadership, and see the diversity of the Hindu tradition.



The Jewish people are lucky. You have a Chief Rabbi, and everyone knows who he is. We, in the Hindu tradition are blessed with Shankaracharyas, Acharyas, and Mahamandaleshwars. As Swami Dayanandaji has often said, we have many “Popes” in the tradition. Our endeavor in the WCORL, is to replicate this initiative among all the major religions in the world, and bring them together in similar settings, where leaders of the different traditions come together, not so much to debate their theologies and philosophies, but rather, to explore ways of understanding each other, seeking commonality and working for the greater global good, with a sense of mutual respect for one another. When religion addresses the concerns and needs of humanity, peace and security, freedom from conflict and violence, only then will it become relevant to lay people. Otherwise, religion would have failed us.

As the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said at the Millennium Peace Summit, “The problem is often not with the faith, but is with the faithful.” It is not the religions that are problems in themselves, but how the texts are interpreted, sometimes even condoning violence. I hope that in this dialogue we shall have the space to address such issues with a view to bringing about global peace and harmony.

Let me say at the outset, that this is not a political meeting. In seeking the various clearances from the Government of India, we made it explicit that this meeting was not of a political nature, and that it’s main aim was to discover ways of fostering greater understanding and cooperation between these traditions. I therefore ask all of you to please conform to the spirit of this meeting.

I shall be remiss if I do not recognize the enormous work that has gone towards making this Summit happen. His Excellency David Danieli, Ambassador of Israel in New Delhi, who has become a good friend in the past two years, I thank you. I also wish to thank the Deputy Ambassador Mr. Yoed Magen for all his cooperation and help.

In preparation for this meeting, His Excellency Daniel Zohar Zonshine, Council General of Israel in Mumbai went to the Acharya Sabha, to witness for himself the diversity of the Hindu leadership. When he entered the hall, he saw all the Acharyas seated on a raised platform in the appropriate Hindu protocol. This is the correct way of going about things, because our Acharyas are our kings; they are the protectors of our tradition, and we look up to them.

Two people have been the central figures in this endeavor. From the Jewish side, it is my dear friend Mr. Oded Wiener, the Director General of the Rabbinate of Israel. His persistence and constant cooperation has been instrumental in making this Summit possible. The seed for this was sown and nurtured by Pujya Swami Dayanandaji. His sankalpa, his intention and commitment, the passion for this initiative has brought about this dialogue.

I am particularly grateful to Rabbi David Rosen; I apologize for the pressure that I have put upon you. I know that a lot of this would not have been possible without your help and cooperation at all times.

I would like to acknowledge the dedicated hard work of Swami Paramatmananda and his team, the Acharyas, the leaders of The Hindu Dharma Acharyas Sabha. Mrs. Balaji, who is quietly sitting in the corner, heads AIM for Seva in India, and belongs to an eminent industrial family of India, the Lucas-TVS group, we are very grateful to you and your team for all your dedication, hard work and contributions to help realize this initiative. My special thanks to Dr. Martha Doherty for all her dedication and hard work without which, this would not have been possible. Some of the spouses of the leaders are present here. The wife of the Chief Rabbi, Mrs. Ofra Metzger, Mrs. Sharon Rosen, wife of Rabbi David Rosen, and my wife, Hanan – who was born and raised in Israel, but is married to me, a Jain - representing both sides by her very presence. I hope that as the days unfold, we can be inspired by each other and engage in meaningful dialogue whose repercussions would be felt for years to come.

Thank you



Inaugural Address

*His Holiness Sri Swami Dayanandaji
Convener Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha*



“Both the Hindu and the Jewish traditions, which have a record of non-conversion, advocate a way of life to accomplish this view”

Namaste and Shalom. My pranams to all the acharyas. When we say: “Namaste”, we bring our two hands together. Our two hands are entirely different, even the fingerprints do not match, but at the same time when we bring them together, it is a form of greeting: Namaste - my Shalom. “Namaste,” means salutations unto you. Hands are different, and they can never match, but they never fight. My left hand does not fight with

my right hand and, and vice versa. All there is, is one, and we are all one. You live in your space, and I in mine. We give others the freedom to be who they are and enjoy one another. This dialogue is a great event. It is not happening a day too early.

We have here the acharyas, the religious leaders, who are the heads of different traditions. We have many lineages within the Hindu tradition, but we do not worship many Gods. There are not many Gods. “There is only one God”. People are the ones I am really afraid of. They say there is one God, and they say, you are not allowed to worship other Gods. One man was standing by a pond, pulling the fish out one by one and throwing them on the ground. Another man came by and said, “Hey! What are you doing? The first man replied, “I am saving the fish from drowning.” Later I learnt that the fellow who was trying to save the fish was a missionary!

We do not bother with this one-God-many-Gods business. In fact, we go one step further and say there is only God. Everything for us is sacred. We take nothing for granted. The light of the sun, the air we breathe, the water, the stars, the solar system, Mother Earth, all is Ishwara, God. This is the view that underlies all the lineages within the Hindu tradition.

Both the Hindu and the Jewish traditions, which have a record of non-conversion, advocate a way of life to accomplish this view. The point of the dialogue is to look for the common features behind our religious philosophies and practices while gladly accepting our differences. We should learn how to live in harmony. Although we

might differ in some respects, we can agree to differ, and work for common good of humanity.

Our religion is, like yours, is an oral tradition. Our oral tradition is very much alive today. Our religion is based upon a book of wisdom as the Jewish tradition is. We call it the Veda. Originally it was the one Veda. In this time cycle, called Kali Yuga, it is presented in four Vedas: Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Atharava. The Vedas are supported by epics, and cosmological texts called puranas. The



Ramayana is itihasa, an epic. These are all supportive books. Our original source, the authority, is the Veda, The Sruti. Vedic recitation is, even today, an oral tradition. You have to get it from the teacher. There is no other way of getting it. One goes to a teacher for 12 years and receives it orally, and memorizes it. That is the tradition. Then the text is examined. We call this “sampradaya”. The text is examined, studied properly, and it is understood why a particular interpretation cannot be given, and why this meaning alone is appropriate. Therefore we have hermeneutics.

One of our main disciplines is connected to *vak*, speech. We learn to govern our tongue. What we say, how, and when it should not be said, and what is not appropriate to say are highly emphasized in the tradition. Most of the stories in our *puranas* and epics are based on the spoken word. Someone made a promise, and therefore, we have the *Ramayana*. In the *Mahabharata*, when Arjuna came rushing to his mother, Kunti, saying excitedly, “Mother, I have a gift for you,” the mother, who was busy with something, without looking up from her task, told her son to be considerate and share whatever he had brought with his four brothers. The gift happened to be a woman that he had just married. Even so, the mother’s word was upheld. We don’t know who is great: Was the woman who had to live her life pleasing five husbands, great? Or, was the mother, whose word was upheld, great? Were the sons great for keeping the mother’s word? Or, were the elders, who gave the verdict upholding the mother’s word, great? Actually, all became great. This is our tradition. We stand by our word, and give our lives for it. For us the way of life is governed by *satyam*, the truth. Fortunately in our national flag, we have the Ashoka Chakra, and the national motto is the Vedic words, *satyameva jayate* –truth alone prevails, finally.



Ashoka Chakra

The word Hindu has a history. They say that the Greeks who came to India could not say the word, “Sindhu,” and therefore called us “Hindu,” but the word has a Sanskrit etymology—“*him apashabdam dushayati khandayati iti hinduh.*” The one who condemns injustice and the absence of dharma, is a Hindu. Even though this word was given to us through mispronunciation, I thank that person who could not pronounce the “S” sound because the word Hindu has such a deep meaning.

Recently something happened in Mumbai. One fellow started a restaurant called, “Hitler’s Cross”, brandishing a swastika next to the name of the restaurant. He abused the symbol. The swastika is a great symbol of good luck and prosperity; he misused it and called it, “Hitler’s cross.” I immediately wrote a letter to him, and to the Chief Minister of the State of Maharashtra, and said that it is against our culture and dharma. It got removed. I wrote to the Rabbis offering an apology, and wrote also to Bombay’s Chief Rabbi. This is the real meaning of the word Hindu.

I would like to say the essence of Hinduism; it is the Vedic wisdom, the Vedic way of life. If we can describe it in a few words, it has a view of life and a way of life to accomplish that view. We have this one God concept. Since there is a book you can, therefore, interpret it differently according to different orientations. Your theology will not be foreign to us. The mahatma who spoke yesterday comes from the tradition that sees God as different from everything else, like the Sephardic theology. He is close to you. The lineage that I represent, Vedanta, is closer to you still. We have yet another tradition interpreting the same Veda – all that is here is one God, and everything is *vishishtam*, attribute. All that is here is one God; there is nothing else, but you and I are attributes to that God. Then we have a transcendental approach, which will accommodate all this from several different standpoints and even go a step further. If there is one God who is limitless and infinite, it cannot be divided, and you cannot be separated from that whole. You are the whole. I can explain this with an example. I take a wave and the ocean. If the wave is self-conscious and self-judging, it can say, “I am a wave, I am born of the ocean, it is different from me,” and I will accept the wave. No problem. If the wave is ready to listen to me, then I can say that you are not totally separate from the ocean, you are part of the ocean -*saamudrohi tarangah*-- you belong to the ocean, and cannot be separate from it. The wave’s interest was peaked. Then I told the wave, “You are not of the ocean; you are the ocean.” The wave was horrified, “How can you say I am the ocean?” If you look at yourself, the top of you is water, the middle of you is water, and the bottom of you is nothing but water. All there is, is just water, and you are that water. The ocean is also 100 percent water; the ocean is nothing but water. This is the final word, as no one can contest that. You can see it and experience it. Whenever you are happy you are whole, you experience yourself. It is the last word. Who can improve it?

Everyone can edit it, but not make it better. If anyone wants to improve it, he or she has to be improved. This is the ultimate philosophy.

We have a way of life based on yoga. The pursuit of dharma is not subservient to pleasure and security pursuits. It is an independent purushartha, a human goal. The capacity of universal justice is an end to achieve in itself. The person able to achieve that is a successful person. A person needs to live a life conforming to what is correct, to what is appropriate. We have to grow emotionally and through inner strength, to conform to dharma. All this is there in the Bhagavad Gita, a book that everyone can read. It is not all out of my head; there are verses to quote. We value non-violence as an absolute value.



We have a two-tier leadership: first there are the priests, religious people who handle rituals, and liturgical sacrifices. They are married people like the Rabbis. Then there are the sannyasis, the renunciates, like us. We Swamis are one step further. When we take sannyasa, we burn our boats and stand under the sky. We have no family, no job, or bank account. In America, I shall be called a hobo, but here I am a “Holy Hobo.” I often receive letters addressed to, “HH Swami Dayananda.” I suppose the “HH” stands for “Holy Hobo!” We are totally committed to truth. Absolute non-violence is our creed. We say this at the ritual for becoming a renunciate, “Hereafter, O Gods don’t be afraid of your positions. You have nothing to fear from me. O people, O

trees, O beings, fear me not. I make a big vow today -*mahavratam karishayami* -- henceforth, none of you will come to any harm from me.” We are committed to nonviolence. That is why through Gandhiji, we got our freedom easily through non-violence.

For the representatives of some religions, however, non-violence is not an option. In 2004, we went to Jerusalem with a delegation for peace promotion. We went to Palestine, and had a dialogue with some Palestinian leaders. One of our Swamis said that there was another way of solving problems -that is, through non-violence. The leader of the Palestinians said he did not believe in it. I told the leaders to engage in dialogue, and to change their thinking.

Therefore, I appeal that there should be dialogues, and that they should promote peace. That is why the World Council of Religious Leaders is highly committed to peace. I am committed and shall continue to work for this.

Together we stand like the coastal redwoods. The redwoods are tall trees; each tree is 365 feet high. They are big trees that you can drive through. They cannot have long roots to help them stand. They stand straight but have shallow roots; they hold each other, so that no storm can get them. We live together, and are together. These two traditions—

Hinduism and Judaism have to come together. We need to have a setup that should work actively to promote understanding and harmony among religions. Thank you.

“One of our main disciplines is connected to vak, speech. We learn to govern our tongue. What we say how, & when it should be said, and what is not appropriate to say are highly emphasized in the tradition.”

“They say that the Greeks who came to India could not say the word “Sindhu,” and therefore called us “Hindu,” but the word has a Sanskrit etymology --the one who condemns injustice, adharma, is a Hindu.”

“The pursuit of Dharma is not subservient to pleasure and security pursuits. It is an independent human goal. It is an end to achieve in itself.”

“Together we stand tall like the coastal redwoods. We live together, and are together. These two traditions—Hinduism and Judaism-- have to work actively to promote understanding and harmony among religions.”



Inaugural Address

Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger

“Don’t close your hand to the poor, because there will come a day when your hand will be open in death, showing that you cannot carry anything to the grave”

I appreciate and thank all of you for the nice hospitality you gave us to welcome us to your country, India. It is the first time for many of us to visit you. It is an historic occasion for us to be together. For me, it is an historic occasion to be in India as the first Chief Rabbi. It will also be an historic moment for both sides to be together, and to sign the



Document of Protocol. I appreciate and thank Bawa Jain, for all what he did until today; he suffered a lot until we arrived all safe. There was a security reason, so we could not come last year. Now we are with you, we feel good to be with you, so that we can learn from each other’s traditions.

We have close behaviors, and belief in the same God. You will see from the speeches of the Rabbis, that there are so many similar customs, even though we live on different sides of the world. The word for India in Hebrew is “Hodu”. “Hodu” means to appreciate and thank. I have to thank you for your behavior to my brothers for the 2,000 years that they were here, in India, safely and without any problems. We are a nation that has suffered in history; a lot of nations hated us because we chose to keep our tradition. We only wanted to live our own life, and believe in the God that we believe in, and worship him in the way that we always did. Millions of our fathers and mothers were killed because they believed in God and behaved like Jews. That is why we need to appreciate the fact that our brothers lived here in your country safely. You gave them all the honor and respect they deserved. Most importantly, they are still alive. They are small in number but they love you and appreciate you. It is an honor you have done to us. India is a temple to all religions, and the word anti-Semitic is unknown to you.



More or less 4,000 years ago God revealed to our father Abraham and told them that your sons will remain in one place for 400 years and they will suffer. They will be slaves, but this will make them more pure-hearted, and they will come through the desert traveling for 40 years to the holy promised land of Israel. We suffered a lot in Egypt, but due to our prayers, and due to God's mercy, the time period was reduced to 210 years. We went outside the empire of Egypt and arrived through the desert to the land of Israel. The son of Abraham was Isaac, and Jacob was the son of Isaac. Jacob had 12 sons and each became a tribe. We have 12 tribes. Our leader Moses was born in Egypt and fasted for 40 days and nights and was given our Bible. We are not the authors of the tradition or of the Bible. God is the author. We cannot change anything therefore. Moses gave us in the Mount of Sinai an oral tradition that after some years was written down. We

have the oral tradition, but we have to connect them together, because we cannot understand one without the other. In our Bible, one of the main points is that we honor the traditional ways of being, and traditional wisdom. This is very different from the modern life with text messaging and internet. If you ask a child what he thinks of his grandfather he would probably say that the grandfather is primitive, because he does not know how to do email. In our tradition, the opposite is true. Elders are revered because they bring wisdom. My grandfather is wiser than me because he is closer to Isaac and Abraham.

Justice is another main point. The Bible commanded us to put codes in every city. About 3,000 years ago, there was a wall around the city. It was decreed that judges and officers of justice have to be near every gate of the city, so that when someone arrived at the city, he or she could have easy access to the judge. Your safety was ensured due to the presence of the judge.

We value the sanctity of life. Even if someone put up his hand to hit his friend in anger, but does not hit his friend, he is considered wicked. For us, violence is one of the biggest sins in the tradition. We have something very important, a prohibition against cruelty to animals. The majority of Jews eat meat, but we are not allowed to eat every kind of meat. If we need to kill the animal, we behave carefully so that the animal does not suffer. We check before we cut the animal's neck with a special knife. It has to be perfectly sharp, so

the animal will not feel the difference between life and death. We are not allowed to hunt in our tradition for play.

To keep and build the family is important. A Rabbi cannot be a Rabbi until he is married. We have to have the experience of married life to advise people.

We keep one day a week, the Sabbath holy in our tradition. We go to the synagogue three times. We are not allowed to smoke, to go to work, light a flame or candle, or do any work on this day.



In our Bible it says, “Do not close the hands for the poor. Open your hands and give him charity.” If God ordered us to help the poor, why has it has been written twice? Nothing in the Bible can be redundant, because it is a revealed text. The meaning is clever. Every father and mother take their baby to the doctor in the beginning of the baby’s life. The doctor checks the reflex by putting his finger in the hand of the child, and child grips the hand of the doctor. This is how a person is born –closefisted and holding onto things. When a person dies, and goes back to God, he dies with his hands open. Why did God create us in such a way that we begin our lives with

closed hands, and finish with open hands? In the beginning, there are so many plans that each person has. There are so many pursuits and the drive to acquire this and that. Open hands at the end of the life show that no one can take anything to the heaven. Only good deeds are taken. Don’t close your hand to the poor, because there will come a day when your hands will be open in death, showing that you cannot carry anything to the grave. This is the meaning of the Biblical statement.

We are suffering a lot. Sixty years ago, the UN declared that the Jewish people after they suffered the Holocaust, that 6 million Jews had been killed. My grandparents were murdered because they were Jewish. They did not know their grandparents. The UN decided that God promised the Jews the Holy Land. God punished us by spreading us all over the land. But now we have a country. Our neighbors did not agree, and during all the 60 years we suffered, as their religious leaders commanded them to kill themselves and to kill others --all for promises of pleasures in heaven. The poor families get money for every suicide bomber that they can sacrifice. It was a local problem but now, it has become a global problem.

When I met the Pope, we gave an area to our neighbors, and we withdrew from Gaza to give them the feeling that we wanted to live in peace. The same day I left the area, the neighbors went to the synagogue and burnt it. I told this to the Pope, that one has to be

careful. In the future, they will burn your churches, and then you will see that this is not a local problem, but a global one.

We have neighbours that are our enemies, but If they have any problems with health, they send them to our hospitals and we save them. For us, peace is the basis of our tradition. We say at the end of each prayer, “shalom;” the God that created peace in heaven will bring peace to us, and to all our neighbors. If you look in the television and see troubles in our part of the world, know that this is against our tradition. We only want to defend ourselves. The media is interested in showing only one side. May God bless us so that we don’t need to defend ourselves, and so we all can live in safety. I want to thank for all your hospitality. May God bless you and be with you, Amen.



The Burning Bush
Plaque Photo Courtesy K. Allen, www.sumon.com

Inaugural Speech

Dr. L.M. Singhvi

Constitutional Expert, Jurist, and Former Member of Parliament



“The Jews unite with us in their adherence to righteous living. We celebrate this righteousness”

Pranams to revered Rabbis and to Swamijis, who represent the heart of India and everything that is holy in this tradition. I thank Bawa for arranging this meeting. I have been working on Hindu Jewish relations for a very long time. This initiative is very important as we seek to engage the Jewish and Indic Religions I have been asked to share some experiences unofficially.

In 1962, I asked Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, to not discriminate against Israel. I wrote to him and said that these are the two oldest traditions in the world. It is about time we took cognizance of the political possibilities of nurturing this connection. I

followed this up by sending Nehru some of the writings of the Jewish tradition. I said that in recognizing Israel, we recognize the Jewish tradition.

It is important for the world today to dialogue. What can be more important than the dialogue between the two most ancient civilizations? We celebrate each other. Ours, therefore, is an alliance of the civilization of values. Many have done much to propagate this idea. We meet not merely to sympathize with the Jewish people, but to celebrate the tradition, and think about how they have survived so long, despite the onslaughts they have had to face.

The world religion means to bond together, to sustain. Dharma is that which sustains and keeps us together. Like us Hindus, the Jews unite with us in their adherence to righteous living. We celebrate this righteousness. We have an ancient saying, “Dharmo rakshati rakshitah.” Those who uphold dharma, righteousness, in turn will be upheld by it. This is fundamental to the Jewish faith. Who can do it better than the two great traditions of humankind?

When the Jews came to India, they were welcomed, protected, and given a piece of land to build a synagogue by the Raja of Cochin. I am proud to say to our holy men and women of learning, that India is proud of the fact that there has never been any prejudice and persecution of Jewish people in this land. For this you can give credit to the ancient tradition of the Hindus. When the two oldest patriarchs of the world meet, we have great expectations. We had a meeting like this in London, when I spoke in a gathering hosted by the Chief Rabbi of England, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks. Later, he said that I spoke like a rabbi! The two traditions must discover each other. We live in an age of disbelief and disaffirmation, but we represent faith and affirmation.



I must tell you that the tie I wear has two symbols on it: Om and menorah. It is the only tie that has many symbols together –the heritage of India is to embrace humanity. We have never taken to conversion as a way of life. Unfortunately, the other two children of Abraham have taken to conversion in many aggressive ways. Mahatma Gandhi's friend Father Andrews was a missionary, but embraced Indian philosophy. Gandhi says it is not necessary to bring people to the gospel. Share the good news, but stop there. Share your tradition, but do not try to convert people. Aggressive conversion is not good. I should feel free to think like a Jew, a Buddhist, or a Hindu. This feeling is due to my intellectual comprehension, which need not be leveled.

Conversion is an affront to other traditions. A piece of legislation was enacted in Madhya Pradesh, a state of India. It proposed to put a ban on conversion by force. The Supreme Court found itself in a quandary. There was a great deal of disaffection from various quarters who thought that their right to freedom of religion was being imposed upon, because freedom of religion for some includes the freedom to convert others. Ultimately, the Supreme Court ruled that the freedom of religion is the freedom to practice one's own religion, not the freedom to make others practice it.

I have seen many dialogues come and go, but I know that as long as the distinguished people will be there with us, it will be with us for a longtime. In the diplomatic world; culture, religion and civilization will be given the front seat of global importance. I hope we can create an institutional mechanism for the protection of our civilization and our Diaspora. The Jewish Diaspora is a remarkable Diaspora --a carrier of culture and civilization, and a symbol of justice and peace. We celebrate our antiquity together. This Summit must carry out the pledge to come together and work for common concerns and the global good in a meaningful manner.

Inaugural Remarks

Rabbi David Rosen

***President, International Jewish Committee for Inter-Religious Consultation, and
Special Advisor to the Chief Rabbinate of Israel on Inter-religious Affairs***



***“If you rise in the morning and see the
sunrise, and you have been to bed at night
and have seen the sunset, and not said a
Blessing, you are a dead man”***

I am very grateful to my friend Bawa Jain for all his efforts to organize this meeting and to Swami Dayananda for hosting us so graciously.

This is a historic meeting. Never before has there been such a meeting of Jews and Hindus. I am very happy to be here. I have been asked to say a few opening words. You may have heard that if there are two Jews, there are three opinions. We are few in number here, and it reflects the fact that we are only few in the world. Probably, even with the few of us in the room with you, it is an over-representation.

The Chief Rabbi has asked me to say something, by way of introduction, about our own self-understanding. I would like to open with echoing the profound resonance that exists between the Hindu and the Jewish world. I would like to focus on one midrash that is 2,000 years old. Midrash is the work of exposition on

the books of Moses. You can get insight through a small story, which is better sometimes than citing the whole scripture. The story says that if you rise in the morning and see the sunrise, and you have been to bed at night and have seen the sunset, and not said a blessing, you are a dead man. What does this mean? It means that everything is a blessing. One does not react automatically because of this fact. If there is no awareness, consciousness, or appreciation of this, of things around you, you are living like a dead person. There are many commandments, which tell us that to live a Jewish life is to be alive to the consciousness. It is a way in which the language, culture, and religion are intertwined. This is not found anywhere, except in the Hindu culture, where the religious culture and society are similarly connected. We hope that this first meeting will lead us to celebrate the preservation of our traditions.



The Dialogue

**Jewish and Hindu Religious Leaders
Discuss Philosophies, Practices, and Areas
of Common Concern**

The Framework of the Hindu Dharma

*His Holiness Mahamandaleswar Sri Swami Vishveshvaranandaji Sanyas
Ashram, Mumbai*



This is a great time for both our countries, India and Israel, because we have gathered here to discuss our traditions. I welcome all of you, especially the Chief Rabbi of Israel. Our religions and traditions are similar. We believe in truth and God. There is not much difference between us. Our religion says “*satchit-ananda*” is God. God is everywhere and God is one, and can be worshipped with and without form.

Another name for this old religion is “Sanatana Dharma.” Our tradition is very ancient, and does not have a beginning. We have no way of saying that it began at this time. It is as ancient as God is. There are other similarities. We believe in *papa* and *punya*, and we

*“Just as an orange is one,
although it has many segments,
so too there are common
practices, beliefs, and ethical
codes that underlie the
differences within Hindu
Dharma”*

believe in charity. *Punya* is the result of good action, and *papa* is the result of wrong action, like cheating, killing, robbing, etc. Therefore, one who has money due to *punya* should share it with others.

Our dharma is primarily based on the Veda and is timeless in nature. Over a period of time, the tradition has mushroomed into a number of interpretations as given by the ancient sages in the lineage such as Shankaracharya or Madhvacharya. There were great souls in this tradition, which, in time, looked at the same Veda and came up with various interpretations. These exalted sages could make the vision come alive, and inspire individuals, by teaching them their interpretations about the Veda. But this does not mean that Hindu Dharma is fragmented. It is still one, however, there are common practices, common beliefs, and common ethical codes that underlie the differences. Just as an orange is one, but has many segments, there are a number of interpretations of the dharma, which respect one another.

Another similarity that we share is that in the last thousand years, we both have suffered at the hands of others. Four hundred years ago, we went through a

bad time with the invaders who destroyed thousands of temples, and who tried their best to destroy our dharma.

In spite of this, we have to say that we are very blessed; that we have survived this kind of onslaught proves that the grace of the lord is with us. Even though we have differences in our perspectives, we are committed to everyone being happy.

Despite the hardships we have suffered, our tradition --being highly committed to compassion-- is a humane tradition that respects all life forms and human beings. I understand that one of the goals of this meeting is to look at our common challenges, to save our traditions, and hand them over to our children; the next generation. This is a small beginning, but we hope to take this initiative further by strengthening it. Let us work together by familiarizing ourselves with each other's traditions, so that we can take this initiative further.



Response by Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger



I am deeply struck by our similarities in terms of metaphors and symbols. The reference to the orange that was mentioned, very much resonates with our tradition. Our sages say we have to be like the pomegranate, which although has multiple seeds is united.

The similarity of the ocean and the wave is also telling. We have a midrash that says that there were heavens, seas, and the firmament between. Waters of the sea came and complained to God, "O God! Why are we so far away from you? We want to be closer to you. The waters were told that their devotion would be clearly seen when the waves jumped up. The punya and papa that the Respected Swami talked about are nothing but the negative and positive commandments. We are told to do something, and to desist from doing its opposite. For example, to speak truth is similar to the injunction to refrain from spreading gossip and untruths. With regard to all evil, we have been told repeatedly to follow ethical conduct by keeping away from falsehood.

An Overview of the Jewish Tradition

Talmudist and Author of the “Encyclopedia of the Customs of Israel”

Rabbi Daniel Sperber,

“The Sabbath is a day when the class system gets eradicated. Servant and master both rest, and give themselves over to a world of spirituality and become equal citizens of God”

I would like to say I feel deeply honored by the Rabbinate to be present at this historic and august gathering. I have had a long-standing love relationship with India. I first came in the late 1950s and was the only rabbi in Calcutta and, therefore, I can say that I was the Chief Rabbi of India. I have felt the personal friendship and hospitality of India, and it was the same sentiment felt by Jews living in other parts of India.

The words “guest” and “host” are both derived from the Latin root, “hospice”. Both guest and host are all guests in the world of God. The first man, Adam, who was created by God was placed in the perfect garden of Eden and was told to guard it. He was not the owner, but a guest. Humanity does not own the world in which it lives, but it is its duty to guard it and make it a better place. Unfortunately, we have not been too successful. Our aim is personal amelioration and social responsibility.

We are not a religion of proselytizers. In our views, all people of all beliefs and faiths should share things, including their



own way of seeing things. There is a precept that says: Thou shall not steal. It implies the recognition of the sanctity of life and the acknowledgment of the freedom of others whether it is personal or national. We also feel that all religions should have respect for the maker, for the ultimate source of our existence. Blasphemy is a basic principle that is common to all people. Those who are not Jewish have equal respect and duties, but we as Jews have taken on some practices as a mandate of God to carry out, but the basic tenets are common to all religions. We are not given the world to spoil.



When I was in India, I was interested in Ramayana and the Mahabharata. I read the story about how Sage Vyasa fasted for many days at the top of the mountains and gained a lot of power. He created a parallel world. As soon as he started to create the parallel world, he lost his power and wasn't able to carry out his intention. We must strive to higher aspirations, but we must be humble. We can try to attain Godliness, but not be proud of it. We must be modest, and modesty is one of the main tenets of our religion.

We have a complex legal system: written law, and the interpretation and hermeneutics so that it is apposite to the particular time and place in which we live. There is a similarity in our traditions. Just as a hammer when it strikes an anvil sends off many sparks, each of the sparks is an interpretation. There are basic notions common to all Jews. The Sabbath is not a matter of being lazy, or going to synagogue, there is a much deeper underlying notion in the concept of the Sabbath. It is a time when we are not allowed to carry out labor. The Sabbath is

a day when the class system gets eradicated. Servant and master both rest. They give themselves over to a world of spirituality and become equal citizens of God.

One interpretation is that God fills every element of the world in which we live, and another interpretation is that He surrounds us. He is both immanent and transcendental. The immanent expresses in material creation including human beings –there is a spark of God in everything; in every individual, is an element of godliness. Consequently, we abhor violence. In every benediction, we stress the word “shalom.”



Response

by Rabbi David Rosen

More than the fact that Israel kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath kept Israel. It is the glue of Jewish religious life. The Muslim philosopher Al Beruni said: "If you want to understand the essence of Jewish religion, you should understand the Sabbath." The mandate to keep the Sabbath appears differently in the Book of Exodus. One of the commandments tells us to observe the Sabbath and the other to remember the Sabbath, as no ears can hear and no mouth can say. They are not talking about the words, but the content of the phrases. It is to remember the creation of the world.

The seventh day is a day of renewal. In the other version it is to remember that the Exodus redeemed us from slavery. What is the purpose of the Sabbath? To remember creation, or to remember Exodus? What is being talked about are the two reasons which are part and parcel of the same thing. We know God's presence through creation, and through suffering. Our sages say that if we truly observe the Sabbath, the world would be redeemed morally. Why? The sources of immoral behavior are two: humans try to play God, and morality becomes subjective.

The other danger is that humans think of themselves as too small. I am small; I am



a victim. The Sabbath reminds us of creation and exodus. God cares about every individual, who is a world in her or himself. The Sabbath emphasizes the value of the individual. Creation reminds us that that we are not god, the world exists with you and no matter how big you are; the world goes on without you. Sabbath reminds us that we are not small. We contribute to the balance and proportion of things. Sabbath restores harmony within and without, and achieving that balance is the secret of life.

Similarities between Our Traditions

His Holiness Mahamandaleswar Sri Swami Gurusharananandaji Karsni Peeth, Mathura

“Both traditions have given birth to many other religions: Hinduism has given birth to Buddhism and Jainism, and, similarly Judaism is the mother of Christianity and Islam.”

Shalom to acharyas, and revered guests. I shall speak on similarities in our traditions. Both our traditions have given birth to many other religions: Hinduism has given birth to Buddhism and Jainism, and, similarly Judaism is the mother of Christianity and Islam.

We have both experienced the persecution of intolerant rulers. We also have been subject to the holocaust during colonial times.

Both our religions are revealed. Hinduism does not have a beginning. It was never started. Dharma was always there. The Vedas are not books, they are revealed facts by Rishis: *Rsayastu mantra-drstarah*, not *mantra-kartarah*. Rishis are the seers of the mantras, not its authors. Vedas are revealed. Similarly Moses did not create the Holy Books. They were revealed. God is the source of both the Jewish and Hindu traditions. Moses did not create the religion. Similarly in our tradition we say even Rama or Krsna didn't create the religion. We have four Vedas, you have five Holy Books. We have smritis, you have midrash. Both of us remove shoes at the temple. We take a ritual bath before special rites. The outer purity is needed to cultivate inner purity.



You keep Kosher, we have what is called “achara”--both refer to strict codes about internal and external purity. We are pure in our food habits. We do not mix certain types of food, or eat old food.

We purify ourselves before going to the temple. During the menstrual period, both Jewish and Hindu women abstain from worship.

We have lunar calendars in both traditions. The number of years in our calendar is the same. For marriages and other auspicious events, we see different days. Both perform marriages under canopies. Some of the rites are similar.

We also have corresponding festivals. In the Jewish tradition, you have Yom Kippur, and we have Navaratri; we fast and pray and do special prayers at the time. The festivals of Purim and Holi, coming in the springtime, signify triumph

of good over evil are in both traditions. When we do a blessing, we use rice as the symbol of fertility. Both, Hindus and Jews, do penance and fasting. In the past, it is said that Jews used to rub ash on the body to purify themselves. We have two important rivers: Jordan and Ganga. Finally, the essence of both traditions is “*Atmanah pratikulani paresham na samacharet*,” do not do unto others what you do not want to have done to you. Om.

Response

Mr. Oded Weiner
Director General of the Rabbinate of Israel

The Revered Swami has made a number of pertinent points about the similarities between our traditions, which are very exciting to hear. I want to reiterate that Moses and Abraham did not found our religion; they were only agents of the divine. With regard to purity, you will be familiar with the Jewish tradition of purification called the Mikvah, and there are many Jews who use this ablution daily for purification.

It is also our custom to throw rice on the bride and groom in the expectation that they will be fecund and productive. There is even a custom of putting ashes on the forehead of the groom to remember the destruction of the temple, and to pray for its reconstruction.

Therefore, it is not surprising that there is little difference between the words “Hodim,” Hindus, and Yehodim, Jews. The words are nearly identical, separated just by the letter “yod,” the “y”. This is significant in itself because the “yod” is the tiniest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. These two letters, “yod” and “he,” spell God in the Hebrew language. It is all really quite profound.



The Principle of Mutual Respect

His Holiness Sri Swami Prabuddhananda, Arsha Vidya, New Delhi



I came to Swamiji 30 years ago, and studied the Vedic texts from him. Swamiji always emphasized dharma, something relevant in daily life. Being fair and just is very important. Whatever I am going to say is all from Swamiji. It is given by the Vedic literature.

There is a particular line in the Gita. Bhagavan Krishna says, “*Parasparam bhavayantah, shreyahparamavapsyatha.*” (Think of each other’s well-being, grow in this, and find fulfillment in life.) Existence is possible only as coexistence. If coexistence is not possible, then existence itself is not possible. Most problems today stem from a lack of mutual respect. We can take hunger, discomfort, poverty, and lot of difficulties in our stride. But it is very difficult to take disrespect in our stride. We cannot advise anyone to take disrespect in one’s stride; when someone disrespects us, we cannot take it.

“Existence is possible only as coexistence. If coexistence is not possible, then existence itself is not possible”

Therefore, disrespect can lead to problems of violence. Mutual respect can bring about harmony and peace among people. One has, therefore, to work for mutual respect.

We never begin from a place of respect, we always begin from disrespect. But at the same time, there is a universal love for being respected. The Vedic culture says that there is love for respect in the mind of everyone, because the individual self’s truth happens to be respectable, being a conscious being, and therefore it is easy for us to respect others if we discover that the person is respectable unconditionally.

Like heat is the nature of fire, respectability is the nature of the person. If respectability is the nature of the person, then it should not be made conditional in our day-to-day interactions.

If we look upon an individual as unconditionally respectable, then just as I am respectable, the other person is also respectable. All living beings are similarly respectable. If we are all respectable by nature, we can be respectful to one another. Despite everyone being respectable, there is always difference of opinions, which can be accommodated or resolved through discussion, so long as we understand that everything is respectable. Vedic culture does not accept conditional respect of

people, but posits that the self is eminently respectable by nature because of it being a conscious reality.

Response

Rabbi Sperber

If I may be permitted to continue in the vein of the words of wisdom we just heard, the basis of religious and psychological intolerance is due to the fact that people think that there is only one truth and I have it. If you do not accept my truth, you are to be denigrated. In Judaism there is no single absolute truth. The same sunset can be seen by two people and each will give an accurate impression, which although different will be truthful. Similarly, there are multiple truths of that which is outside of us. God creates everything that is not identical. We see truths in our own subjective fashion. There is no single, holistic truth; each person has his own truth. It is important to take this lesson and teach it to the next generation.

The process of secularization has blurred this lesson, especially for youth. There is the story of a man who once saw an old man planting a carob tree, and asked him why he was planting a tree. The old man replied: "My ancestors planted a tree, so I could benefit from it, and I do the same." We must be concerned not only with our immediate needs, but we have to see the trends that are taking place. We need to practice and teach more tolerance and dignity. If we respect the other for his views, then we recognize he has a

legitimate truth; there is no pressure to make the person take on our truth. When we speak of educating the next generation, we should give them roots in their own tradition, so that they might thrive on these roots to strive higher.

Icarus wanted to fly to the sun. He made wings stuck with wax. The heat of the sun melted the wax, they fell away, and he was destroyed. This ancient Greek tale teaches us that to aspire for wings without roots is dangerous. Aspiration ungrounded in the bedrock of tradition leads us to lose our balance and to fall. By taking all these notions together, that violence is something we must abhor, and that we must practice mutual respect and inculcate it in the next generation, is the only way to create harmony. I would like to use another parable. Harmony in Hebrew means completeness, which can come about only by bringing together complementary things, which are not identical.

According to classical mythology Adam was one who was divided into a woman; men and women each have something lacking, but coming together as opposites, they complete each other. Harmony is a balance between opposing forces. The meeting of different views, the dialogues, is the duty and challenge of faith groups, to combat secularism in order to bring about the amelioration of the world. We have to plant trees so that our grandchildren can eat the fruits.



Altars of Worship in Hinduism

His Holiness, Sri Swami Vidadatmanandaji, Arsha Vidya, Ahmbedabad

“It is not that the people worship the idol, metal or stone, that is in front of them, but it becomes a stepping-stone for worshipping God”

I shall speak on the Hindu practices of worship. The Hindus are described as idolaters and have been looked down upon and denounced. So we seek to offer some clarification about the worship practices of the Hindus. Judaism accepts a single God who is both immanent and transcendental. The Vedas also teach the same thing. The all-pervasiveness is not confined to human beings, but God pervades all existence. All that is there is pervaded by God. Since God pervades all names and forms, we can invoke God in any name or form. God is not only formless, but the Vedas teach us that there is only God. All that there is, is God. Whatever has form is also a manifestation of God. God can be worshipped as something beyond forms, but at the same time, whatever has form, also has the presence of God. We find Hindus worshipping god in forms. It is not that the person worships the idol, metal or stone, that is in front of him, but it becomes a stepping-stone for worshipping God. When I look at picture of my Mother, I am looking at my Mother, not at the piece of paper. The photo becomes an aide for invoking the memory of the Mother, like a person doing a high jump with the help of a vault pole. Hindus don't worship idols, but worship god, and invoke god in forms. This is based on the teaching that god is all-pervasive.

There is a statement: may you look upon teacher, father, mother, guest and the whole universe as God.



The world is not apart from God. Therefore, we seek a sympathetic understanding on the part of other religious leaders to not dismiss us as idolaters. In Hinduism, there is a lot of thought given to it, as the Hindus are a very enlightened people. Just like the Jews analyze all the words of the Torah, we also analyze our scriptures. Hinduism recognizes diversity so that the entire humanity can be taken care of.

There are many different kinds of devotees. Some are sophisticated, and do not require aids for worship, whereas others need props of names and forms. There are many forms of worship. Worshipping forms are an elementary way of worshipping God. You can let go of the form. Form worship is a stepping-stone to worshipping god beyond forms. To illustrate this, we can give the example of an actor who assumes various roles. The actor plays the roles of a king,

a beggar, and a minister. All the roles are different, but the same actor pervades all the roles, and at the same time transcends all the roles. Therefore in the beggar you can also invoke the millionaire actor, as he is the expression of the millionaire actor.

God is not confined to a particularity, but the form is an aid to worshipping the one who pervades all names and forms. The devotee is asked to see God as all names and forms, and ultimately transcend forms and sees him as the self. Therefore we urge you to study fundamental Hinduism and see that it is very inclusive of everything. This being the case, we can develop respectfully. We don't need to tolerate anyone. We need to respect them. Gandhi said to missionaries, "Hindus are capable of achieving the goals through their religions, and do not need other religions".



Response

Rabbi David Rosen

We don't want our Hindu colleagues to think that our perception of religion is totally relativist and that from the Jewish perspective; one religion is as good as another. In other words, while we affirm the freedom of religion, there must be limits to pluralism. When are those limits met? The limits are met above all, whenever human dignity is denied, whenever a religious approach denies dignity to another. Anytime a religion seeks to use violence as a tool to promote its interests, it is automatically in conflict with the universal principles, which Judaism affirms. Therefore, while Judaism recognizes self-defense as a valid reason for taking up arms, it can never justify the wanton, intentional killing of innocents in any way whatsoever. The denial of life and dignity of others is where the limits get crossed. It is essential that religion affirm the divine presence that is reflected in the human personality.

Idolatry, when it is used in the Hebrew Bible is not just referring to a theoretical abstraction; it is referring to particular way of life of immoral conduct. In other words, that denial of the transcendent reality is denied in the individual, which sanctions all kinds of abominations with the norms that the Bible records with the norms when the children of Israel came into the Holy Land. Therefore, the great 14th century sage, Rabbi Menachem, affirmed that community which adheres to moral principles of ethical conduct is by definition not idolatrous.

The History of Jews in Western India

*Rabbi Abraham Benjamin, Official Rabbi of India,
Shaar Hashamaim Synagogue, Thane*

“We were never in fear of observing any of our customs, or losing our traditional ways. We never faced persecution. This is what India has given to the Jewish community”

My great-great grandfather came from Israel 2,000 years ago, and seven families landed in the shores of Navgaon, and were received unconditionally, with open arms. This welcome represents the eternal bonds between Hinduism and Judaism.

India was a rich country then. Indo-Jewish relationship predates Islam and Christianity. Once the Jews came here, they never left India. They migrated. The Jews came to Cochin shores also, and there was a Hindu king who gave them land to build a Synagogue free of cost. He asked the Jews to stay with his people and worship with them. The highlight of our history in this country is that wherever we went, we were welcomed exactly as we were. We felt loved and safe, and were given all the facilities needed to conduct our livelihood and our way of life.

The Jews of India live amidst all communities. My neighbor on the left is Hindu, the one above is Christian, the one on the right is Muslim and the one on the next block is a Parsi. Sometimes our festivals coincide. We never felt at any time that we are different from the people around us.



We have a Jewish school called “Jacob Sasoon” high school and a Synagogue. This was a school only for Jews. I started teaching there in 1973. We then had nine hundred students. As time passed, Jews started to migrate back to Israel. Since we are located in an area that is 99 percent Muslim, we gave Muslim children admission because they wanted to study there. The prayers were in Hebrew. But the Muslim children prayed with us. Today the school has 850 Muslim and 50 Jewish children. Still it is called the Jewish school and the prayers are still conducted in Hebrew.

Indian Jews never suffered. Our wives and children participate happily in all festivals of India. We are proud to be Indian, proud to be Jewish. We were never in fear of observing any of our customs, or losing our traditional ways.

We never faced persecution. This is what India has given to the Jewish community. We are a microscopic presence in India. We number less than 1.2 million, but still do not have the feeling that we are a minority in India. There is no majority or minority in India.

There was a sad incident when some people burned a mosque, and rumor spread that the Jews had burnt it. Approximately 150,000 Muslims tried to burn the Synagogue. What saved the Synagogue was the Hindu intervention. The Hindus stood between us and the Muslims. The Hindus said if you touch even one stone of any Jewish houses, we shall see that disaster will befall you.

Recently, when this man started a restaurant called “Hitler’s Cross,” it was Swami Dayanandaji who came to our rescue. Before any of us could take a step He started a campaign to stop the abuse of the Swastika.

When we walk on streets, I wear the cap, and have no fear of how people will treat me, or whether I shall become a target of violence. Unfortunately, I cannot say the same thing of the Holy Land. The conditions are not too good there. When I walk in the land of my forefathers, I have to be vigilant at all times, and watch my back.

We can all talk of human nature, peace, love, and harmony, but to implement it, it is not easy. If we can educate the masses, we shall achieve this in the future. We have not done enough to put humanity in every human being. Together, we can work to raise awareness and educate the people.



Response

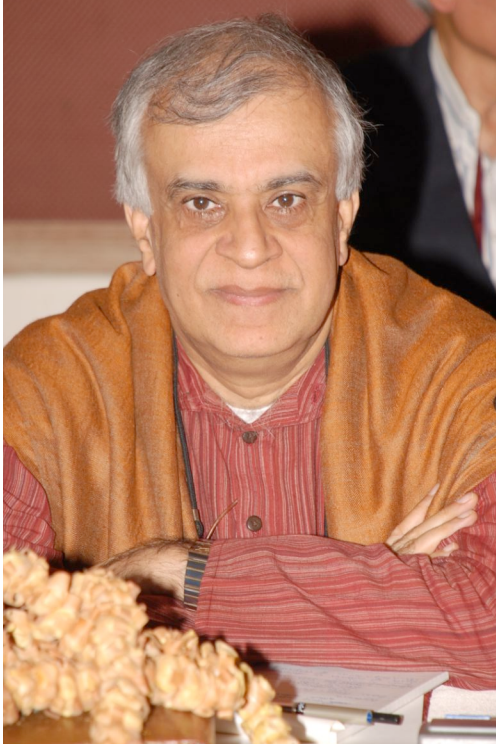
His Holiness Pujya Sri Swami Dayanandaji

Our Chief Rabbi from Bombay talked about the abuse of the swastika by an ambitious entrepreneur who started a restaurant called “Hitler’s Cross.” I condemned that saying that this is a blatant crime. But at the same time, I have no choice but to defend the symbol as a religious symbol of the Hindus. Every home will have a Swastika, but it is right handed. “Svastikam samayuktam ashtamangalam archayet,” says an ancient text. There are eight auspicious things for us: Elephant, pot, flag, oil lamp, fan, conch shell, lotus, and the Swastika. These are all auspicious symbols according to our texts. While I totally condemn the use of the Swastika in any other context except the religious context, I appeal to the Jewish leadership to appreciate our Hindu sentiments and totally accept this symbol for use as an auspicious symbol of our tradition.



The Aryan Myth, and its Consequences for the Hindu Tradition

*Prof Rajiv Malhotra, Infinity
Foundation, USA*



I would like to talk about one issue which has caused great harm to both Hindus and Jews, which is still active today. In the 19th century, the Aryan theory was formulated by scholars, which said that Sanskrit and Vedas came to India from the West, where it got diluted to become Hinduism. This was a colonial device to put down India and Hinduism, and to take credit for the wonder of the Sanskrit language. It was taken in, hook, line and sinker, by Lord Macaulay and other imperialists.

The theory that posited Nazi superiority was based on the same fabricated Aryan identity, and led to the Holocaust. All Jewish people must be concerned about the origins of the Aryan theory. This theory has been creating havoc in India.

“When we look at India and her civilization, what makes the culture respectful and tolerant is the Hindu foundation, the Hindu civilization”

It says that what we practice is not Hinduism, but an upper caste fabrication to oppress others. This is a powerful academic tool in South Asian departments all over the world. We need to unite to overcome this.

There is no word called “Aryan”. There is only “Arya,” which means noble, with good qualities. It is not a race, or ethnicity. The noun “Aryan,” is a fabrication. This is a serious thing that happened. This has become so deeply ingrained in the Indian psyche that we have believed it fully. It will keep haunting Hindu-Jewish unity.

The Nazis used the swastika as a symbol. Not only Hindus, but Buddhists and Jains also use the swastika. The appropriation of the swastika went hand in hand with the theory. It became a symbol of Aryan superiority. This is one of the challenges that both our communities should have to overcome.

When we talk of idolatry, the Jewish injunction against idolatry was never to destroy other people’s traditions, or forms of worship. Later on, the off-spring of Judaism got out of hand, and took it as a franchise to implement it on all the peoples of the world. Our temples were filled with gold, and it became an easy way to justify killing and looting people.

Finally, I would like to say that when we look at India and her civilization, what makes the culture respectful and tolerant is the Hindu foundation, the Hindu civilization. People say that the Indian ethos of respect and tolerance is a legacy of colonialism. Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are from the same ethnic stock, and experienced colonialism as well, but they are different. The Hindu difference of India has to be appreciated more than it has been. This should be the underlying foundation of any educational venture. Without this, there can be no change whatsoever.

Response

Rabbi David Rosen

I thank Prof. Malhotra for these important points. I am not sure you will do too well in what you see as credit for the Jewish injunction against idolatry. Our understanding of idolatry has to undergo a transformation.

You have given an opener: Education. Even though we are so far away, we are not too far from anything. For example, my home overlooks the lights of Amman, but culturally we are not close, we do not know much about each other. Although there is no shortage of Israeli travelers in India, in all honesty, our young know nothing about the Hindu heritage, and I suspect it is the same the other way round. We have to engage our respective educational authorities and review educational materials to see if there are other ways of overcoming these gaps. The way to address this, technically at least, is through the area of holocaust education so that people have a better understanding of how Hindu culture was distorted, abused, and continues to be denigrated by a group of vested interests.

We have made some recommendations, which have already come out in the Declaration. For example, we have a joint repudiation of proselytizing, while leaving room for the possibility for people to feel themselves part of the community that they were not born into. We are obliged to embrace such a person. When someone comes to the Rabbinic Court and says, "I want to be with you," we are obliged to say that they are not required to convert to find the fullness of their soul. The person is already acceptable in the eyes of the Almighty. We are obliged to tell the person that they are loved and acceptable as they are so long as they follow the basic moral codes.



Then if the individual insists, we can convert them, but this is not what we mean by proselytization, which, by definition, is an expression of disrespect. We have a joint commitment not only to freedom of religion, but also freedom from religion, if it is being imposed on us. We need a clear consensus about the abuse of religion, done by people who claim to be its greatest guardians. This is a big tragedy; none of our religions today are free of it. We all have our extremists who abuse the tenets and the values that

we love the most. We must have limits to pluralism in our own communities, and we must have the strength and courage to repudiate those who abuse the values of our traditions in order to promote their partisan interests.

We have the large task - a joint obligation - not only to one another, but also to the garden in which we are placed - our environment and our ecosystem, which are seriously threatened today. It is sad that among those in the vanguard of the struggle of trying to protect the planet are hardly any identifiable voices of religious leadership. This should be a responsibility on all of us to work together so that the voices of our religious heritage, which is the source of the respect we feel for the environment, are heard loud and clear. We should be leading the struggle to transmit the values of caring for the environment to the current and future generations. We teach fundamental religious values, of modesty, not being wasteful, not to over-consume. Both our religions emphasize responsibility in a world that is mad with over consumption. Ideally, what I would like to see coming out of our work is to look at the issues of our time - ecological issues, stem cell research, and genetic engineering. What must we as Hindu and Jewish leaders say to the world about these issues that threaten our well-being and that of all those who live on this planet should be our concern.

Response

Mr. Balbir Punj

Former MP and Senior Executive of the BJP



We have been discussing about respecting each other's faith. It means that we should not try to convert others to our faith with violence. India has suffered that for 800 years. Many preferred to die rather than be converted. In the modern times the technique has changed, but conversion continues.

Now, they use the medium of cheating, fraud, and monetary inducements. They try to buy peoples' faith with a loaf of bread and moneybags. Why should the state not intervene in such a situation? If in civil societies, prostitution is not allowed, how can we allow the sale of human souls for a few coins? If the world has to be made peaceful, we must address such issues.

What We Have to Learn

*Dr. Subramanian Swamy,
Professor, Harvard University, and
Former MP*



Hinduism and Judaism are not only the oldest religions, but they have common theological premises. One, both are non-converting and, two, both have not had conflict, and, three, both have suffered at the hands of other religious forces, and face common dangers.

As a Hindu, I would say that today in India we would like to focus on what we can learn from the Jews. You have demonstrated that which you have learned from the Hindus. We need to learn this from the Jews: What is that commitment by which a small country can survive and strike terror? We need to know how you revived the Hebrew language. You have also demonstrated how you have harmonized tradition and modernity. We would like to learn all this from you, and also partner your efforts in self-preservation. I am shocked to learn that there is no department for Hebrew or Jewish studies in our country. We need to look into getting an endowed Chair, so that Hebrew and Jewish studies can be taught in institutions of higher education.

What We Have to Give

*Sri S. Gurumurthy,
Eminent Lawyer and Journalist,
Chennai*

This is an enlightening summit; it is an interface of the two oldest and deeply persecuted faiths. That in this world, to follow a lifestyle, billions of people have to be sacrificed makes a poignant backdrop for such dialogues.

If you look at India's history, it has been the home of persecuted faiths. When the Jews came, they were received as "atithi," guests, following the cultural command to treat the stranger as God. Again, it is only in India that the Parsi scripture and culture are alive today.

The earliest Muslims in India were Kutchi Memons. They had no problem being governed by Hindu Laws. A civilization that treats its strangers as manifestation of God never has distinguished any people on the basis of what they worshipped. The Hindu-Jewish ethos is demonstrably the ideal one for the world today, especially with regard to how strangers are received. It is not an engineered quality, but an inherent quality of the traditions.

We deal with 33 million Gods, who coexist peacefully, so can we. Hindus and Jews are the experts in knowing how people of different faiths can work together. Globalization demands that there be a faith that can live with other faiths. We need to export our tolerance.



A Comparison in the Hindu Tradition

Sri Swami Madhavapriyadasji, Swami Narayan Sanstha, New Delhi



Swami Dayanandaji said we have many Popes, but we are not here to convert anyone. We are here to respect the rights of humanity. What I see in the kingdom of love is that language is not essential. A loving heart talks with loving head.

This is a loving summit to create love for the whole creation. In our tradition, we have great respect for confluence, for sangam. When I listened to the Chief Rabbi, I felt that two rivers flowing for thousands of years have merged together at this summit and this is the confluence. Thanks to the organizers, we have had the chance to take a dip in this pious confluence of traditions.

*“When I listened to the Chief Rabbi,
I felt that two rivers flowing for
thousands of years have merged
together and this summit is the
confluence”*

We have so many similarities, with regard to rituals, ideas, worship, and suffering. What I feel is that suffering is not punishment. Suffering is a blessing from God, to make us strong. The Jewish community has suffered, but the people survived like lions. Israel is the land of lions, although surrounded by jackals and hyenas.

We should establish centers for the comparative studies of Hebrew and Torah, Sanskrit and Veda. Abraham, in our meaning, is connected to a famous phrase, “Aham brahmasmi.” The highly realized person merges with God. This is similar to the word “Abraham”. Dear friends, we have to interpret our symbols also.

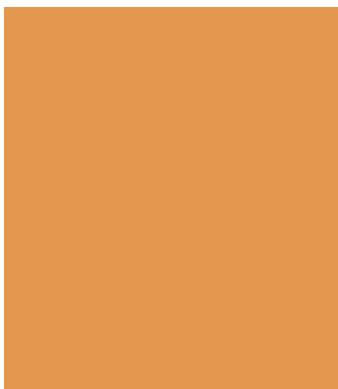
There are many beads in the rosary, but within that diversity, uniqueness is also there. We cannot stop diversity. It is natural, it is the creation of God, but differences are the creation of the human ego. We should remove the ego, which is the main obstacle in our path. How to create unity to face challenges that affect both our religions? How to stop destructive forces? These are our main goals, which I hope we can discuss in the coming days. Hari Om.

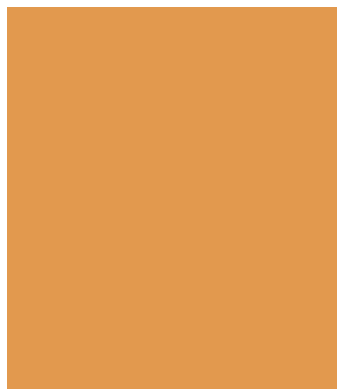
The Declaration of Mutual Understanding and Cooperation



The first Hindu-Jewish leadership summit took place in Delhi on 17-18 Shvat, 5767; corresponding to February 5-6, 2007; at which the delegation of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel convened with major religious leaders of Hindu Dharma. It is planned that this historic gathering will lead to ongoing bilateral meetings on shared values and common concerns, many of which were highlighted at this Summit. The participants affirmed that:

- Their respective traditions teach Faith in One Supreme Being who is the Ultimate Reality, who has created this world in its blessed diversity and who has communicated Divine ways of action for humanity for different peoples in different times and places.
- The religious identities of both Jewish and Hindu communities are related to components of Faith, Scripture, Peoplehood, Culture, Religious Practices, Land and Language.
- Hindus and Jews seek to maintain their respective heritage and pass it on to the succeeding generations, while living in respectful relations with other communities.
- Neither seeks to proselytize, nor undermine or replace in any way the religious identities of other faith communities. They expect other communities to respect their religious identities and commitments, and condemn all activities that go against the sanctity of this mutual respect. Both the Hindu and Jewish traditions affirm the sanctity of life and aspire for a society in which all live in peace and harmony with one another. Accordingly they condemn all acts of violence in the name of any religion or against any religion.
- The Jewish and Hindu communities are committed to the ancient traditions of Judaism and Hindu Dharma respectively, and have both, in their own ways, gone through the painful experiences of persecution, oppression and destruction. Therefore, they realize the need to educate the present and succeeding generations about their past, in order that they will make right efforts to promote religious harmony.
- The representatives of the two faith communities recognize the need for understanding one another in terms of lifestyles, philosophy, religious symbols, culture, etc. They also recognize that they have to make themselves understood by other faith communities. They hope that through their bilateral initiatives, these needs would be met.
- Because both traditions affirm the central importance of social responsibility for their societies and for the collective good of humanity, the participants pledged themselves to work together to help address the challenges of poverty, sickness and inequitable distribution of resources.
- The representatives of the two faith communities also agree to constitute a Standing Committee on Hindu-Jewish Relations.





Concluding Remarks of Dignitaries and Organizers

Concluding Words of Blessing

*His Holiness, Jagadguru Sri Swami Vidyaranya Bharatiji
Sri Shankaracharya of Hampi Math, Karnataka*

I do not have much to say; many things have already been spoken by both sides. What we have witnessed, in the convention, is the resilience of these traditions, who have stood by their beliefs despite great persecution.

In this world, we have to be aware of two “cars” -- “sams-car” (habitual patterns) and “aham-car.” (ego, “I-ness”). If wealth is lost, nothing is lost; if health is lost, then something is lost. But if culture and character are lost, everything is lost. We have seen the diligence and determination with which the Israelites have built up everything after losing it. We too can learn from this, and make the best of every situation that confronts us, like converting milk into ghee (clarified butter). I pray to Lord Virupaksha to help us succeed in this Herculean endeavor. Om.



Concluding Remarks by the Ambassador of Israel to India

His Excellency, the Honorable Mr. David Danieli



Respected Leaders and Friends, It is a great honor for me to attend this significant occasion when Hindu and Jewish religious leaders get together for the first dialogue of its kind. This is indeed an historic Dialogue that brings with it great promise of cooperation in the fields of our respective religions and cultures, which will have far reaching effects. It is inspiring to me that there is so much we have in common as human beings, and as religious persons. Faith should be a common bridge that unites us, and not a dividing line, as all of you eminent speakers have rightly pointed out.

Your dialogue, respected leaders, is the most valuable dialogue of all both in the backdrop of human history in the world, and the history of my people in particular. I pray for the success of our interactions as leaders and scholars. May this Summit benefit the future generations that ought to live in a better environment, and contribute towards the shaping of a more tolerant and compassionate world. The mutual understanding and shared values expressed here are the important building blocks along the way. Let us nurture this dialogue which has the potential to benefit others in different communities and faiths. I wish to express my sincere thanks to the Chief Rabbi of Israel for carrying the onerous responsibility of leading the Jewish Delegation. Likewise I express my admiration and gratitude to Swamiji and to all respected Hindu leaders present. Last, but not the least, I acknowledge

Bawa Jain, Secretary General of the World Council of Religious Leaders. I have witnessed his tireless efforts to bring about this meeting for over a year. He has made it. You have all made it. As the representative of the state of Israel, I am fully at your disposal to further this dialogue, and will do what needs to be done to carry it into the future. I have no doubt that my government; likewise, will extend to you its fullest cooperation for convening future meetings. Most of all, I very much look forward to welcoming you to the Holy Land for our next meeting.

Concluding Remarks by the Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger



We have spent two full days hearing ideas and thoughts, and could not imagine that our teachings could be so similar. When the Secretary General of the World Council said that 5 million Hindus had been slaughtered instead of being converted, it gave me goose-pimples. When one has to adjure one's faith one has to suffer martyrdom. Such people are the saintly ones who have submitted their soul for their faith. I would like to conclude with the homily, which summarizes today's gathering.

I offer this story for use in your own communities. There are people going across a river in a boat. They are being ferried across, and they suddenly sense that the boat is beginning to sink. They conclude that there must clearly be a leak. When they try to find the source of the leak, they find that there is a man at the back of the boat, making a hole in the bottom of the boat. One of the passengers said to him, "O foolish man! What are you doing? Stop it right now! The

man replied, "What I am doing is none of your business, whatever I am doing, I am doing it in my own spot, which I have I paid for, so you just mind your own business." Everyone else joined in and said, "What you are doing is affecting all of us, and will make us all sink."

We can all go back to our part of the world and continue living separately, punching holes in the ozone, but the point of the homily is that we cannot go away by ourselves and do whatever we like, because we live in a shared reality, and our actions affect others. Therefore, we have shared responsibilities. We have to do our part to care for the world and to thereby ease others' burdens. I hope that we can bring other faiths together to understand the collective responsibility that we have to fulfill.

Educating future generations to not abuse their bodies and violence is the key. Not only is human life sacred; all of life is holy and places are likewise sacred. Just as in the political realm embassies are immune to assault; holy places should likewise have extraterritorial status so that we can duly protect them. There are those who misrepresent events and try to deny the rights of others. I call upon all the peoples of our faiths, to respect their sanctity regardless of to which faith they belong. Our sages say our protection of wisdom is in silence. Our Hindu brothers listened so well, and exercised great self-control. We need to learn that we need not have to be so keen to talk as we often are. I want to thank you for this glorious beginning that we have made, and for this wonderful time spent together, which has provided great opportunities for learning, sharing, thought, inspiration and action.

Concluding remarks of Pujya Sri Swami Dayanandaji

Convener, All India Movement for Seva



When I was a schoolboy, I read a Shakespearean play “The Merchant of Venice,” in which the Jewish moneylender, Shylock is presented as unethical and bloodthirsty. These were our first lessons in English. We were taught that Anthony was a Christian, so he was a good man; Shylock being a Jew, was a miser. What is a child to make of this? As a boy, I learned to have prejudice against Judaism. It took years of work to neutralize this prejudice. Therefore, I am very conscious of how minds are manipulated, so I consider the topic of mutual respect as the bread and butter of interfaith dialogue.

Mutual respect is an important topic, which is not really dealt with in any of the international religious leaders’ conferences. Every time I open the subject of mutual respect among religious leaders, I get resistance from certain groups. They do not like the word “mutual respect”. They prefer to use the term “religious freedom,” which they interpret in their own way, so that they can continue with whatever activities they are committed to for spreading their beliefs among others.

I have nothing against the freedom of religion. It is an important topic, but it must be interpreted properly. Freedom of religion is something that everyone must have. Jews must have this freedom to live, to live with dignity, and to practice their religion freely. Hindus also must enjoy the same right, and if we can recognize this, there will not be any problems. The religious person, even a non-believer, is the core person. We wear many hats and play many roles, but the core person is the religious person who pervades all the roles. That person must be respected, no matter what his or her religion is. This is the basis for mutual respect. If the person has to disown his or her religion, heritage, parentage, and culture, it is a travesty - it amounts to the destruction of the person. It is violence; it is inhumane, and there must not be any sanctions for any human being to perpetrate this violence.

Finally, I shall say that it was a great joy listening to our Chief Rabbi. He is tall; his thinking is tall, and his participation was very effective. We look forward to more such meetings for promoting mutual understanding. Rabbi David Rosen, with his great voice and command of language almost made us all Jews. He talks from his convictions, and we love that. You love your traditions, and you believe God spoke Hebrew, and we say God spoke Sanskrit, but it is okay because God has to be a linguist. We thank all of our friends for this great dialogue. These two traditions have to come together and strengthen each other. Then we can work actively to promote mutual respect, understanding and harmony among religions.

Thank you. Om tat sat.

Concluding Remarks by Mr. Bawa Jain
Secretary General, World Council of Religious Leaders

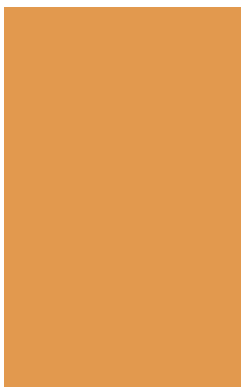


Undoubtedly, the last two days have been extremely enriching. The members of the World Council of Religious Leaders have made it explicitly clear that this Summit is going to go forward; there is a great momentum and conviction to move it forward. The Standing Committee, which has been established, will work as a body to meet together within six months to plan the next set of initiatives. There was a lot of passion expressed in this Summit. You have seen how even the most exalted of Hindu leaders like His Holiness, the Shankaracharyaji, said that there was a lot to learn from you all. This can happen only because he is a Hindu. This accommodation is fundamental to the culture of Hinduism. We have a lot to offer, and so do you. Together, the two of the oldest religions can carry a beacon of peace, and spread it among other religions of the world. We hope that through this, and other such initiatives, we can have an impact on the world platform and achieve mutual respect and freedom for all. To this end we are fully committed.





OUTCOMES





STANDING COMMITTEE HINDU JEWISH RELATIONS

Hindu side

1. Chairman – Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha
2. Executive Trustee – Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha
3. Secretary - Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha
4. Advisor Inter Religious Affairs - Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha
5. Secretary Legal - Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha
6. Two trustees to be nominated by Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha

Jewish Side

1. Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel
2. Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel
3. Director General Chief Rabbinate of Israel
4. Advisor on Inter-Religious Affairs Chief Rabbinate of Israel
5. Ambassador of Israel in New Delhi
6. Professor Daniel Sperber
7. Mr. Ezra Moses Jewish Diaspora in India

World Council of Religious Leaders

1. Secretary General
2. Director General
3. Others as Secretary General deems fit

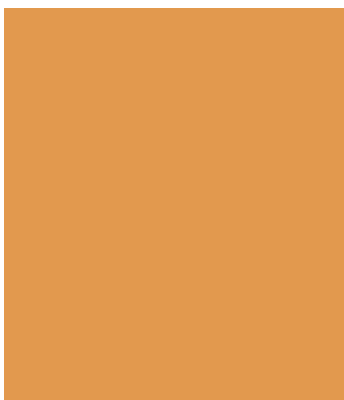
SCHOLARS GROUP

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| • Prof. Daniel Sperber, Chairman | • Swami Dayananda Saraswati |
| • Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen, Chief Rabbi of Haifa | • Dr. Ms. Anuja Prashar |
| • Rabbi Ratzon Arussi, Chief Rabbi of Kiryat Ono | • Sri R. Venkatanarayanan |
| • Rabbi David Rosen | • Sri Rajiv Malhotra |
| • Mr Oded Wiener, ex officio | • Dr. R.Vaidyanathan |
| • Professor Nathan Katz | • Dr. Martha Doherty |

FUTUTRE DIRECTIONS – Looking ahead

This is the first in a series launched from WCORL to engage the World's Religious Leaders from every major religion in an effort to build greater understanding and cooperation amongst our religious traditions. We understand, and will act on, the imperative to expand the discussion to a Hindu-Christian, Hindu-Muslim interchange, and will continue to undertake the necessary initiatives to promote religious harmony. The entire program is strictly non-political. As a direct follow-up to this Summit, there will be a Summit of the Hindu and Jewish leadership in Israel and the following year we shall convene the Hindu - Jewish Diaspora of The World in the United States.

In conjunction with the visit of the Jewish delegation, the WCORL also organized in cooperation with The Indian Council of Religious Leaders a meeting of Jewish and Buddhist Religious Leaders followed by a Round Table with representatives of the major religions of India. We are most grateful to ICRL and Maha Bodhi Society of India President Dr. B.K. Modi and his staff for organizing these meetings and to Dr. B.K. Modi for hosting a banquet in honour of the Chief Rabbi and the Jewish Delegation.



On the sidelines, a closed open and frank session with the visiting Jewish Leaders and eminent Muslim Leaders was convened. Not only was this historic but a smaller delegation of Muslim Leaders signed a document (attached to this report) with Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger and Moulana Jamel Ahmed lyasi, President of All India Organizations of Imams of Mosques, facilitated and witnessed by WCORL Co-Chair Swami Dayananda Saraswati and Secretary General Bawa Jain. This initial exchange then resulted in the visit to Israel of a Muslim delegation facilitated by The American Jewish Committee. We are most grateful to Mr. Romesh Bhandari, WCORL Senior International Advisor for facilitating the meeting of Muslim and Jewish Leaders.



On behalf of The World Council of Religious Leaders, I am very grateful to all those who have contributed in numerous ways to realize this dream of assembling the Leaders of the two oldest Religions – Hindus and Jews. Indeed this initiative has enormous prospects. It will take a lot of commitment and continued efforts from all sides to fully realize the potential of this initiative.

Particularly, I wish to express my deep gratitude to Swami Dayananda Saraswati and Mr. Oded Wiener, the representatives of the Hindus and Jews for all their leadership, cooperation and absolute commitment to this initiative. To Rabbi David Rosen for his continued facilitation, to Ambassador David Danielli, Counsel General Daniel Zohar Zonshine and their colleagues for all their cooperation.

I am particularly grateful to Mr. L.K. Advani, Member of Parliament and Leader of the Opposition, without whose efforts this meeting would not be possible; Mr. Balbir Punj for all his help. Mr. Shiv Shanker Menon, Secretary of The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Vinod Duggal, Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs and all their colleagues for their cooperation. Swami Parmatmananda and all the leaders of The Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha, I



thank you from the bottom of my heart for all your dedication. My friends Mr. Ravi Sawhney, Senior International Advisor of WCORL and Mrs. Madhu Sawhney, Regional Director of WCORL for their liaison and help with the Government of India to secure all the clearances and obtain the requisite permissions.

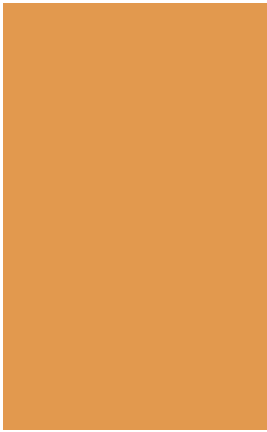
Especially, I am deeply grateful to Ms. Sheela Balaji, her staff and AIM for Seva for hosting all of us so graciously. Mr. M.P. Narayanan, Mr. Mani, thank you very much. Sadhavi Vrnda Chaitanya for all her help in transcribing the speeches and putting together the first draft of this report. Last but not the least, I am personally most grateful to Dr. Martha Doherty, most certainly, we would not have been successful and realized the vision for this



Summit had it not been for all her efforts and cooperation. She has been an invaluable partner. On a personal note, I am very grateful to my Wife Hana T. Jain. She has been of immense help at all times. Her tireless and skillful handling, her dedication, understanding of support, facilitation and me has been a pillar to aid me in all my efforts to ensure the success of this Initiative.

“No Peace in the World until Dialogue among Religions”! Dr. Hans Kung.





PARTICIPANTS

Jewish Delegation

- **Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger**, Israel, Chief Rabbi of Israel
- **Mr. Oded Wiener**, Israel, Director General, Chief Rabbinate of Israel
- **Chief Rabbi David Rosen**, Israel, President, International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultation (IJCIC); International Director of Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee (AJC)
- **Rabbi Professor Daniel Sperber**, Israel, Professor of Talmud and Jewish Studies at Bar Ilan University
- **Rabbi Dr. Israel Singer**, USA, Chairman, International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultation (IJCIC); Chairman, Policy Council of the World Jewish Congress
- **Rabbi Moshe Garelik**, USA, Director of the Rabbinical Center of Europe
- **Chief Rabbi Albert Guigui**, Belgium, Chief Rabbi of Belgium
- **Chief Rabbi Isak Haleve**, Turkey, Chief Rabbi of Turkey
- **Chief Rabbi Benito Garcon-Serfaty**, Spain, Former Chief Rabbi of Spain and Professor of Jewish Studies at the University of Madrid

Representatives of the Embassy of Israel in India

- **Mr. David Danielli**, Israeli Ambassador, New Delhi
- **Mr. Daniel Zohar Zonshine**, Consul General of Israel, Mumbai
- **Mr. Yoed Magen**, Deputy Consul General of Israel, New Delhi

Representatives of the Jewish Community in India

- **Mr. Solomon Sopher**, Chairman, Sir Jacob Sasson Charity Trust & President, Kneseth Eliyahu Synagogue, Mumbai
- **Rabbi Abraham Benjamin**, Mumbai
- **Mr. Benjamin Reuben**, President of the Jewish Community in Ahmedabad
- **Mr. Ezra Moses**, Hon Secretary & Trustee, Shaar Hashhamaim (Gate of Heaven) Synagogue, Mumbai
- **Mr. Issac Samson**, Asst. Commissioner of Police (Retd.), Crime Branch C.I.D branch, Mumbai
- **Rabbi Joshua Kolet**, Chairman, Hazon Eli – Vision of my God, Mumbai
- **Lt. General (Retd.) J.F.R. Jacob**, Delhi
- **Mr. Ezekial Malekar**, Hon. Sec. Judah Hyam Synagogue, New Delhi
- **Mr. Nissim Moses**, President, Indo-Israeli Support Services, Delhi

Hindu Delegation

- **H. H. Swami Jayendra Saraswati Jagadguru Sankaracarya**
Shi Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam, Sampradaya: Sankara
- **H. H. Sri Swami Vishwesha Theertha**
Paryaya Sri Pejavara Adhokshaja Matha, Udipi, Sampradaya: Madhva
- **H. H. Sri Swami Balagangadharanatha**
Sri Sri Sri Jagadguru of Adi Chunchungiri Math, Sri Adi Chunchungiri Ksetra Sampradaya: Natha
- **H. H. Swami Avimuktesvarananda Sarasvati,**
Representing Dwaraka Sarada Pitha and Jyoti Math, Sampradaya: Sankara
- **Sri La Sri Nachiappa Jnana Desika Swamigal**
Kovilur Math, preservation of the Vedanta tradition in the Tamil language, Sampradaya: Sankara
- **Shri Murli Manohar Sharan, Nimbarka Mevad Mahamandaleswar**
Sampradaya: Nimbarka
- **H. H. Sadhu Madhav Priyadasiji**
Head, Swami Narayan Gurukul, Gharodi, Ahmedabad, Sampradaya: Swaminarayan
- **H. H. Swami Satchidananda Sarasvati**
Sri Adi Shankaracharya Sharada Lakshmi Narsimha Pitham, Sampradaya: Sankara
- **H. H. Sri Swami Vidyaranya Bharati,**
Jagadguru Sankaracharya, Sri Hampi Virupaksha Vidyaranya Mahasamsthanam, Sampradaya: Sankara
- **H. H. Sadhu Atmaswarupdas,**
representing His Holiness. Sri Pramukh Swamiji Maharaj. BAPS, Akshar Dham.
Sampradaya: Swaminarayan
- **Sri Swami Vishveshwarananda Maharaj,**
Mahamandaleswar of Sannas Ashram, Haridwar, Sampradaya: Sankara
- **H. H. Swami Gurusharanananda Girji**
Acharya Mahamandaleswar Kaeshni Math, Mathura, Sampradaya: Udasi
- **H. H. Swami Mahamandaleswara Hamsadasji**
Secretary, Akhila Baratiya Santa Samiti, Sampradaya: Vaishnava
- **H. H. Mahamandaleswara Maheswarananda Puriji**
Vedant Kutir, Mumbai, Sampradaya: Sankara
- **H. H. Sri Swami Dayananda Saraswati**
Founder and Avharya, Arsha Vidya Pitham; Managing Trustee Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha
Sampradaya: Sankara
- **H. H. Swami Veditatmananda Saraswati**
Acharya, Adhyatma Vidya Mandir, Ahmedabad; Board of Directors, AIM for Seva, Sampradaya: Sankara
- **H. H. Swami Paramatmananda Saraswati Acharya,**
Arsha Vidya Mandir, Rajkot, Secretary, Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha, Sampradaya: Sankara
- **H. H. Swami Chidrupananda Saraswati**
Acharya, Arsha Vidya Ashram, Hibli, Sampradaya: Sankara

- **H. H. Swami Sarvabhutananda**

Sampradaya: Sankara

- **H. H. Swami Aparoksanada**

Swami Dayananda Ashram, Rishikesh, Sampradaya: Sankara

- **H. H. Swami Prabuddhananda**

Sampradaya: Sankara

- **H. H. Swami Sambuddhananda**

Sampradaya: Sankara

- **H. H. Swami Nityabuddhananda**

Sampradaya: Sankara

Other International Known Religious and Spiritual Leaders

- **Swami Chidanandaji**

Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh

- **Shri Pranav Pranav Pandya**

Head of Gayatri Parivar

- **Sri Sri Ravi Shankaer**

Founder, Art of Living Foundations and Programs

- **Sri Swami Maheshwarananda**

Founder: International Sri Madhavananda Ashram fellowship and Yoga in Daily Life Ashrams

Observers

- **Professor Arvind Sharma**, Birks Professor of Comparative Religion, McGill University, Montreal, Canada
- **Dr. M. P. Narayanan**, Office Bearing Trustee, All India Movement for Seva
- **Sri Venkatanarayanan**, General Secretary, Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha
- **Sri Rajiv Malhotra**, Founder and President, Infinity Foundation
- **Mr. Balbir Punj**, Eminent Thinker and Journalist
- **Sandhya Jain**, Journalist
- **Sri Govind Hari**, Administrator, Pushpagiri Sakara Math

World Council of Religious Leaders

- **Sri Bawa Jain**, Secretary General, World Council of Religious Leaders
- **Venerable Shi Ming Yi**, Director General, World Council of Religious Leaders
- **H.E. Dr. L. M. Singhvi**, International Adviser, World Council of Religious Leaders

PROGRAMME

February 5th Monday

- 6:30 p.m. **Introductory Session** - Taj Palace, Roshanara Room
- Hindu and Jewish Devotion Chants
 - Introduction of Participants
 - Welcome Address
 - Introduction of Mode of Discussion & Topics
- 8:00 p.m. **Inaugural Dinner**

February 6th Tuesday (All Sessions in Mumtaz Mahal, Yaj Palace Hotel)

- 9:00 – 9:30 a.m. **Inaugural Function**
- Hindu and Jewish Devotional Chant
 - Welcome Address
 - Introductory Talks by Hindu and Jewish Leaders
- 9:30 – 11:15 a.m. **Session I** *Education: Understanding of Jewish and Hindu Traditions*
- Philosophy
 - Religious Symbols
 - Religious Practices
- 11:45 – 1:00 p.m. **Session II** *Education cont.*
- Culture and Customs
 - Common Aspects of Hindu and Jewish Tradition
 - Finalizing and Signing of Document of Protocol
- 12:30 p.m. **Press Conference**
- 1:00 p.m. **Lunch**
- 2:00 – 3:30 p.m. **Session III** *Identifying and solving the problem*
- *Areas of Common Concern*
 - *Areas of Mutual Cooperation*
 - *Formation of Future Steps*
- 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. **Session IV** *Concluding Session*
- Address by Political Leaders
 - Background of the World Council of Religious Leaders
 - Hindu-Jewish Leaders Closing Remarks
 - Vote of Thanks
- 7:00 p.m. Dinner at the home of Sri L. K. Advani, M. P., Leader of the Opposition.



Hindu-Jewish summit held in New Delhi

7 Feb 2007

Hindu and Jewish religious leaders meet for the first time for a two day dialogue on a range of religious issues.



Israeli Chief Rabbi Metzger with Hindu religious leaders

(Communicated by the Foreign Ministry Spokesman)

An historic event took place in New Delhi (6-7 Feb-2007), when Hindu and Jewish religious leaders met for the first time for a two day dialogue on a range of subjects. Among the subjects discussed were the relevance of tradition in everyday life, similarities and dissimilarities between the two religions, and education. The purpose behind this unusual inter-faith dialogue was the promotion of understanding, tolerance, peace and conflict resolution through religion.

The summit was organized by the World Council for Religious Leadership and the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. Jewish participants included the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel, Yona Metzger, the former Chief Rabbi of Ireland, David Rosen, the Chief Rabbi of Belgium, President of the Committee for Relations between Judaism and other Religions, and additional rabbis from Europe, the United States of America and India. Also present were Israeli ambassador to India David Danieli, Consul General to Mumbai, Daniel Zonshine, and director-general of the Chief Rabbinate, Oded Wiener. Hindu participants included some thirty prominent priests from all over India.



The summit began with the singing of a traditional religious song of each religion. On the first day representatives of each side - Chief Rabbi Metzger and Swami Daynand

Sarawati - signed a declaration recognizing the values common to the "two most ancient religions in the world", condemning all religion-based violence, and announcing the formation of a permanent Jewish-Hindi committee. The event took place in a pleasant and vibrant atmosphere.

In a joint statement, Rabbi Metzger called for the formation of a religious organization under the auspices of the United Nations for the promotion of peace and understanding. He added that, in Hebrew, only one letter differentiates between "Jew" and "Indian", thus emphasizing the proximity of the two nations and their religions. Metzger invited his Hindu colleagues to visit Jerusalem for the continuation of the dialogue.

Sarawati noted that the Jewish-Hindu dialogue will serve as a milestone for others, and will promote understanding and a better environment for everyone. He further added, "I have always believed in peaceful co-existence in a multi-religious environment. All religions should respect common values and insist on compassion. Religious leaders bear the responsibility of leading their followers to a path of peace so that the world will become a safer place to live."

THE HINDU

a meeting in the evening but hi-2021 would be notified On the one hand the MCD sume from Wednesday.



PEACE AND HARMONY: Founder of Arsha Vidya Pitham Swami Dayanada Saraswati (left) and Chief Rabbi of Israel Yona Metzger (right) along with Secretary General World Council of Religious Leaders Bawa Jain showing the document after signing a protocol to spread Global Peace and Harmony at the Hindu-Jewish Summit in New Delhi on Tuesday. - PHOTO: S. SUBRAMANIAM

Hindu and Jewish religious leaders sign declaration

It acknowledges the shared values of the two religious traditions

Madhur Tankha

NEW DELHI: To propagate global harmony, the World Council of Religious Leaders (WCORL) facilitated the signing of a 'Protocol of Cooperation' between Hindu and Jewish religious leaders here on Tuesday.

The declaration was signed by the chief rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Yona Metzger, and Swami Dayanand Saraswati, convener of Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha, at the end of the two-day Hindu-Jewish Leadership Summit here.

The summit agreed to constitute a standing committee of Hindu-Jewish relations. The declaration primarily acknowledges the shared values of the two of the oldest living religious traditions in the world and condemns all forms of religious violence.

Benchmark

Speaking on the occasion, Swami Dayanand Saraswati said, "Hindu-Jewish dialogue will act as a benchmark for others to follow and emulate, resulting in a better environment for one and all. I have

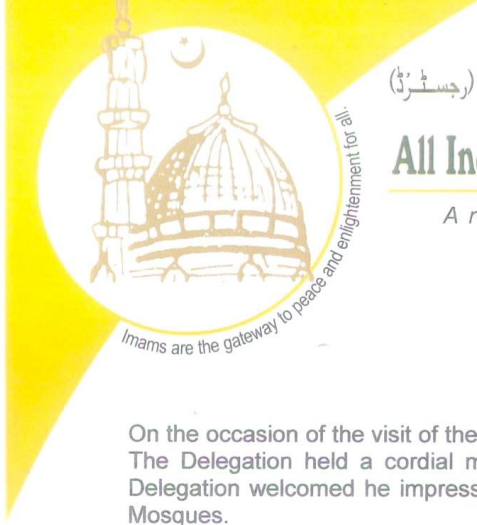
always believed in peaceful co-existence in a multi-religious environment. All religious traditions should respect common values and insist on compassion. Religious leaders have great responsibilities in leading people of their respective faiths to a peaceful path so that the planet is safe for us to live."

Lauding the efforts of the WCORL, Rabbi Yona Metzger said though their religious dialogues have increased recently, the Hindu-Jewish declaration is a significant

move that highlights the necessity of expanding inter-faith community.

"For thousands of years we have marched on parallel causes and now built bridges of cooperation between the two religions. Jews have lived in India for 2,000 years and have never been discriminated against. This is something unparalleled in human history," added Rabbi Yona Metzger.

WCORL will also organise a discussion here on Wednesday with leaders of Buddhist and Islamic faiths.



آل انڈیا تنظیم ائمه مساجد (رجسٹرڈ)

All India Organisation of Imams of Mosques (Regd.)

A representative body of half million Imams of India

HAZRAT MAULANA JAMEEL AHMED ILYASI
(President)

On the occasion of the visit of the delegation of the chief Rabbinate of Israel to India, The Delegation held a cordial meeting with Muslim leaders of India. The Jewish Delegation welcomed the impressive statement of All India organization of Imam of Mosques.

In keeping with this statement The Jewish & Muslim Participants of the Meeting declared Muslim and Jews share tradition and legacy. We are bound by history, civilization culture, common values. From Adam to Moses there is everything that unites us and even thereafter Islam through Quranic injunctions calls upon Muslims to treat Jews as Ah-e-Kitab and the believes in Judaism as God fearing people.

Similarly Judaism views Muslims as the believer in a god require that they be treated with full dignity. While relations with Jews and Muslims have been influenced regularly in recent years by political factors. We have a long history of good and healthy relations between us. We declare that it is high time for the religious leaders of both sides to engage in dialogue and use their collective influence to stop the bloodshed of innocent civilians. We condemn killing, reject extremism and the misuse of religion of acts of violence. Suicide is a forbidden act in Islam and Judaism and therefore suicidal attacks cannot find sanction neither in Islam nor in Judaism.

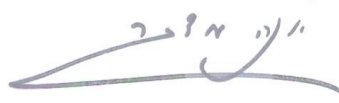
We pledge ourselves to work together to promote the sanctity of life and to advance justice and peace.

We appreciate the role of leadership of the World Council of Religious leaders in this direction.

Moulana Jameel Ahmed Ilyasi

Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger, Israel


President




co-chair, W.C.O.R.L.

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