Report of the

2nd Hindu-Jewish Leadership Summit

February 17-20, 2008
Jerusalem, Israel

An initiative of the World Council of Religious Leaders

Hosted by The Chief Rabbinate of Israel









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World Council of Religious leaders

Of The Millennium World Peace Summit

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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 Acharys Sabha

Dr. Oded Weiner
Director General
Chief Rabbinate

Bawa Jain
Secretary General
World Council of Religious Leaders

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2nd JEWISH-HINDU LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

JERUSALEM, FEBRUARY 17-20, 2008

AN INITIATIVE OF

THE WORLD COUNCIL OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS

HOSTED BY

THE CHIEF RABBINATE OF ISRAEL

WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE

AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

THE CHIEF RABBINATE OF ISRAEL
DIRECTOR GENERAL

הרבנות הראשית לישראל
המנהל הכללי

February 17, 2008
י"א אדר א תשס"ח

Dear Honoured guests,

I welcome you to Jerusalem, the heart and soul of Israel.

May we be blessed with Divine Guidance for our deliberations, that they may bring us to greater understanding and knowledge to be a blessing for one another and our world.

I wish you a most enjoyable and enriching stay.

Very sincerely yours,

Oded Wiener

Oded Wiener
Director-General
Chief Rabbinate of Israel

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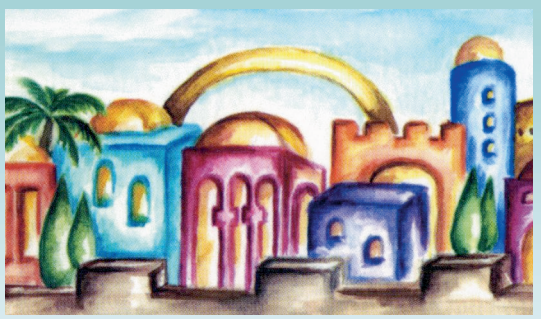













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Jewish-Hindu Leadership Summit

Introduction – Foreword

In February 2007, the 1st Hindu Jewish Leadership Summit was convened in New Delhi, India. At this Historic Summit, we succeeded in overcoming misperceptions and misunderstandings of over two millennia. This was the launching of the World Council of Religious Leaders "Religion One on One" initiative.

In February 2008 the 2nd Hindu Jewish Leadership Summit was convened in Jerusalem, Israel. For the assembly of a very distinguished Jewish and Hindu Leadership, we are indebted, as this gives even more legitimacy and credibility to this initiative. These have been extraordinary Summits amongst the World's two Oldest Religions, Hinduism and Judaism. Please refer to both, the last report and the Declaration from the 1st and 2nd Summits to fully comprehend the enormity and significance of this initiative.

These Summits would not have been possible without the extraordinary efforts of many for which I am very grateful to, from The Chief Rabbinate, Sephardic Chief Rabbi Shelomo Amar and Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger both Chief Rabbis of Israel, Mr. Oded Wiener, Director General of The Chief Rabbinate, Chief Rabbi David Rosen, International Advisor, President of The International Jewish Committee for Inter-Religious Consultations, International Director for Inter-Religious Affairs of The American Jewish Committee, from The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Yaron Mayer, Director for South-East Asia, Ambassador Bahig Mansour and Mr. Salah Abu-Tarif, the head and assistant respectively of Inter-Religious affairs and all their colleagues, staff and assistants. Specially, Ms. Avril Promislow, Assistant to Rabbi David Rosen, without whom all the coordination and arrangements would not be possible. We are indeed very grateful to the Government and people of Israel for their warm and gracious hospitality. I dare say, the Hindu delegation fell in love with Israel!

From the Hindu side, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Convener of The Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha, Swami Parmatmananda and Mr. R. Venkatnarayanan, both Secretaries of The Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha, Dr. Martha Doherty, Assistant to Swami Dayananda and all their colleagues and assistants at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam and All India Movement for SEVA.

From The World Council of Religious Leaders, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Avdeshananda Giri, Chief Rabbi David Rosen and Mr. Oded Wiener, all Board Members of WCORL for their leadership, untiring support and dedication and to my Wife Hana for all her dedicated service, coordination, translation and support. Her Parents - my In-Laws Mr. and Mrs. Michel and WadiaTotary in Haifa for all their contributions and support.

In conjunction with the visit of the Hindu Delegation, The Chief Rabbinate of Israel, The office of The President of Israel, The Government of Israel, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel and The American Jewish Committee organized very special meetings with President Shimon Peres, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert whom we ran into

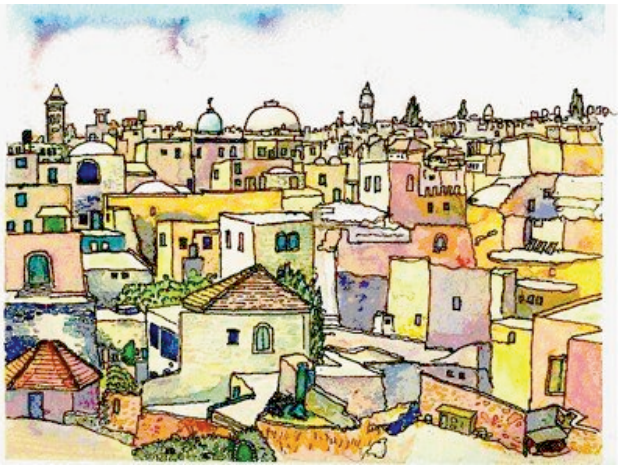
during our visit to the Knesset, Deputy Foreign Minister M.K. Majali Whbee, Minister Isaac Herzog, visit to the Israeli Knesset – Parliament, visit to Yad Vashem – Museum of The Holocaust, Holy sites, a special dinner with eminent members of the Israeli Indian community hosted by the American Jewish Committee, a Luncheon hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel, a special Conference on Religion and Ethics at Mishkenot Sha'ananim, a special Inter-Faith meeting hosted by the Honorable Mayor of Haifa, Mr. Yonah Yahav, visit to The Druze community in Dalit el Carmel, the Bahai community in Haifa, The Ahmedi Center and a dinner hosted by the President of Haifa University Dr. Aaron Ben Zeev.

It is our intention and commitment to advance this initiative by engaging the Diasporas of both the Hindus and Jews around the World, to educate the communities on the historic break through, to seek ways of cooperation at all levels, publishing books for broader circulation for education with specific references from the sacred scriptures that enables the adherents to be better informed of the beliefs and practices, developing curriculum, establishing Institutional relations, a Think Tank to explore specific areas of collaboration and support, organizing ongoing meetings and exchanges, as a corollary and in light of the rapidly growing relations and strategic alliances of India, Israel and USA.

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 ongoing open dialogue, 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



Painting by Michael J. Molloy

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 Comparative Studies in Hinduism and Judaism 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 Inter-Religious dialogue has been a 'tool for evangelization' in the hands of Christian missionaries, when Jews and Hindus converse, there are no ulterior motives."



Mughal painting of India

The Hindu-Jewish Summits will 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 legitimating 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 other's 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 other's 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 viewpoints.



Message of His Holiness
Shankaracharya Kanchi Kamakoti Pithachipati Jagadguru
Sri Jayendra Saraswati Swamigal



Among the various civilizations in the world the Vedic civilization is the most ancient. Similarly the country of Israel and the people have been there for thousands of years even before the birth of Christ. Both these countries with their ancient cultures have a lot of similarities in terms of religious and spiritual values. In India the Hindu tradition praises the Kshatriya Dharma, people in administration as the protectors of religious culture. Any amount of sacrifice is not too much as long as it is for the protection of dharma. The same thing is highlighted by Bhagvad Gita – svadharma nidhanam sreyan paradharmo bhayaavahah – upholding one's dharma even if one looses one's life is better than embracing others' dharma which is fraught with fear.

Further we always say both mother and motherland (jananii janmabhumisca) is greater than heaven. The people in Israel have a similar commitment to their dharma and their land. My prayers and best wishes to both the Hindus and the Jews to come together and work for promoting their respective culture and religion and protecting their countries.



http://www.harekrsna.com/sun/features/10-08/features1171.htm

Message of Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati ji
Convener, Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha



On behalf of The Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha I thank the Israel Government, The Chief Rabbinate of Israel, The American Jewish Committee and The World Council of Religious Leaders for organizing this Hindu – Jewish meet in Jerusalem. The first meeting that took place in New Delhi was very fruitful in understanding each other. There is much more to learn. Ignorance always divides. The more we know each other, the more we can work together on important issues affecting both the religious traditions.

I had always found a number of customs and manners among the Jews to be the ones we see in Hindu Orthodoxy. For instance, the Hindu Priesthood is handled only by the householders. The monastic life is the final stage committed to the pursuit of spiritual knowledge. It is a life of mediation and learning.

I am very happy that we have in our delegation scholars and scholar monks headed by Sri Swami Avdeshananda Giri. I am very sure the outcome of the discussions will mutually help us in preserving and promoting our ancient religious traditions.

Due to my illness I am missing a very good opportunity to be with you in your Holy Land. But I am sure I will have another opportunity.



http://www.harekrsna.com/sun/features/10-08/features1171.htm

The Chief Rabbinate of Israel

The Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha

Declaration of the Second Hindu- Jewish Leadership Summit

The Hindu-Jewish Leadership Summit took place in Jerusalem 11to 14 of Adar 1, 5768, corresponding to February 17-20, 2008, and maghacaturdasi suklapaksa during Vikram Samvat 2064 by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel in cooperation with the American Jewish Committee (AJC). An initiative of the World Council of Religious Leaders (WCORL) to promote understanding and mutual respect between the Rabbinic leadership and the major Religious leaders of The Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha, this second meeting provided the opportunity to The Chief Rabbinate to reciprocate the gracious hospitality enjoyed at the historic first successful summit in New Delhi last year. The Summit in Jerusalem was followed by meetings in Haifa with the religious leaders of the other official religions of the State of Israel.

Pursuant to the discussions between the delegation of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the Hindu religious leadership representing the Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha, the following affirmations were reached:

1. In keeping with the Delhi declaration, the participants reaffirmed their commitment to deepening this bilateral relationship predicated on the recognition of One Supreme Being, Creator and Guide of the Cosmos; shared values; and similar historical experiences. The parties are committed to learning about one another on the basis of respect for the particular identities of their respective communities and seeking, through their bilateral relationship, to be a blessing to all.

2. It is recognized that the One Supreme Being, both in its formless and manifest aspects, has been worshipped by Hindus over the millennia. This does not mean that Hindus worship 'gods' and idols'. The Hindu relates to only the One Supreme Being when he/she prays to a particular manifestation.

3. Central to the Jewish and Hindu world view is the concept of the sanctity of life, above all the human person. Accordingly, the participants categorically reject violent methods to achieve particular goals. In this spirit, the participants expressed the hope that all disputes be resolved through dialogue, negotiation and compromise promoting peace, reconciliation and harmony.

4. As the two oldest religious traditions of the world, the Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha and the Jewish religious leadership may consider jointly appealing to various religious organizations in the world to recognize that all religions are sacred and valid for their respective peoples. We believe that there is no inherent right embedded in any religion to denigrate or interfere with any other religion or with its practitioners. Acceptance of this proposition will reduce inter-religious violence, increase harmony among different peoples.

5. The participants expressed the hope that the profound wellsprings of spirituality in their respective traditions will serve their communities to constructively address the challenges of modernity, so that contemporary innovation may serve the highest ideals of their respective religious traditions.

6. In the interests of promoting the correct understanding of Judaism, Hinduism and their histories, it was agreed that text books and reference material may be prepared in consultation with the scholars' group under the aegis of this Summit.

7. Svastika is an ancient and greatly auspicious symbol of the Hindu tradition. It is inscribed on Hindu temples, ritual altars, entrances, and even account books. A distorted version of this sacred symbol was misappropriated by the Third Reich in Germany, and abused as an emblem under which heinous crimes were perpetrated against humanity, particularly the Jewish people. The participants recognize that this symbol is, and has been sacred to Hindus for millennia, long before its misappropriation.

8. Since there is no conclusive evidence to support the theory of an Aryan invasion/migration into India, and on the contrary, there is compelling evidence to refute it; and since the theory seriously damages the integrity of the Hindu tradition and its connection to India; we call for a serious reconsideration of this theory, and a revision of all educational material on this issue that includes the most recent and reliable scholarship.

9. The bilateral group of scholars may engage in further elaboration of the foregoing affirmations, exchange material to enhance mutual understanding, clarify the positions of the Hindu and Jewish traditions regarding contemporary challenges in science and society, and identify programs of action for the future.







Opening Dinner Mount Zion Hotel





Welcome and Orientation

Rabbi David Rosen,
President, International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultation (IJCIC); International Director of Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee (AJC)

Rabbi David Rosen warmly welcomed the Hindu delegation for their reciprocal visit and thanked the World Council of Religious Leaders for this initiative. He expressed deep gratitude to The Chief Rabbinate of Israel, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Government of Israel, The American Jewish Committee and The Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha for all their contributions and cooperation to ensure the success of this 2nd Summit.

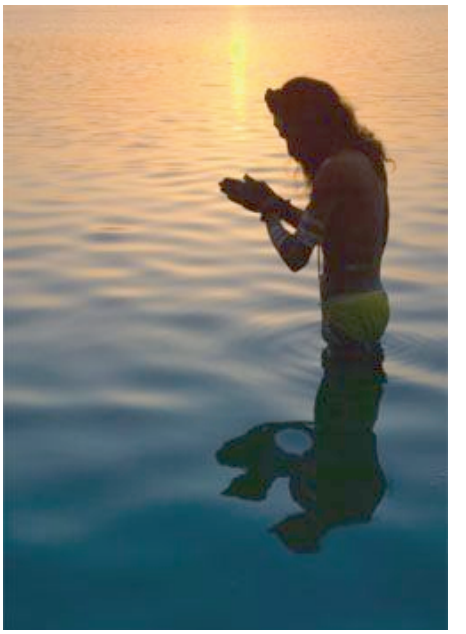
He gave an exhaustive overview of the history of Jerusalem from the time of the ancient Temple, the Roman era, until modern times. He explained that Mount Zion Hotel where we were meeting was St. John's Hospice in 1948 when Israel as a state came into existence. Jews trapped inside the Old City escaped by a cable linking the Walls of the Old City to the Hospice.





Hindu Prayer

Swami Paramatmananda Saraswati Acharya, Secretary, Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha



www.boloji.com/ culture/014.htm

We begin with a prayer seeking the blessings of God. In our tradition, all the natural forces are looked upon as manifestations of The Lord – the Creator in its different manifestations. We begin with the word "Svasti", which means let the auspiciousness befall on all of us. The first prayer is to the Lord Indra, who is the God of rains; rain signifies food and prosperity all around. Let there be peace among all human beings and all of Gods creation. Having invoked the blessings of God, the last invocation is to the first teacher "Brhaspati", that we may be blessed with the right kind of thinking, may we be blessed with the right decisions. May all the human beings be happy, let there be no pain, or "Duhkha" or agony to any living creature.

Jewish Prayer

(Attributed to Rabbi Nachman ben Feiga of Breslov, 1773-1810)



by beggs, www.flickr.com/ photos/94509941@N00/417556122

Lord of Peace, Divine Ruler, to whom peace belongs!
Master of Peace, Creator of all things!
May it be thy will to put an end to war and bloodshed on earth, and to spread a great and wonderful peace over the whole world, so that nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.
Help us and save us all, and let us cling tightly to the virtue of peace. Let there be a truly great peace between every person and their fellow, and between husband and wife, and let there be no discord between people even in their hearts.
Let us never shame any person on earth, great or small.
May it be granted unto us to fulfill Thy Commandment to "Love thy neighbor as thyself," with all our hearts and souls and bodies and possessions.
And let it come to pass in our time as it is written, "And I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down and none shall make you afraid. I will drive the wild beasts from the land, and neither shall the sword go through your land."
God who is peace, bless us with peace!!

OPENING SESSION

Bawa Jain,
Secretary General, World Council of Religious Leaders



" In your coming together as Hindus and Jews, there is great hope for all humanity, especially in this land, which has witnessed so much tension and so much turmoil"

"Boker Tov", Good Morning. On behalf of the World Council of Religious Leaders it is my esteemed honor and pleasure to welcome you all to the Second Jewish - Hindu Leadership Summit.

At the outset, I must express my deep gratitude, from the Jewish side, to the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, its Director General Mr. Oded Wiener, the International Director Chief Rabbi David Rosen, the Chairman of the International Jewish committee for Inter-Religious Consultations and Director, Inter-Religious Affairs of The American Jewish Committee.

From the Hindu side I must thank the Chairman of the delegation Swami Avdeshananda Giri ji, Swami Parmatmananda, the Secretary of the Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha, all in the name of Swami Dayananda Saraswati, the convener of the Acharya Sabha who was unable to join us today as he was suddenly taken ill.

I also want to express my deep gratitude to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel, Mr. Yaron Mayor the Director for South-East Asia, Mr. Bahij Mansour and Mr. Salah Abu-Tarif, the head and assistant respectively of the Inter-Religious affairs of the Foreign Ministry of Israel.

We are very grateful to all the Rabbis and distinguished Jewish Leaders who come here, to all the eminent Hindu Swami's and the entire Hindu delegation who come here. This is historic because here is the assembly of the representatives of the two oldest religions. Each of the major religions of the world has been born from these two great religions. The coming together of these two religions, is the coming together not only of the two oldest religions, but two ancient civilizations, two ancient cultures.

In your coming together as Hindus and Jews, there is great hope for all humanity, especially in this land, which has witnessed so much tension and so much turmoil. Perhaps, in the coming together of the leaders of these two ancient religions, there could be a new way, a new hope that there can be peace in this land, that somehow the Hindus can be a bridge. Where others have tried and failed, perhaps there may be a new way, a new dimension to seek Peace. This is the Holy Land of the world. All of us look up to this place for aspirations and hope.

Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger reminded us last year when he visited India that Jews have existed since several thousand years in India and never has there been a case of discrimination or anti-Semitism. Like last year, the Jewish leaders came to India to say Hodu (thank you in Hebrew) to the Hodus (Hindus in Hebrew), in the same spirit today the Hindu leaders come to reciprocate your visit.

This is a non-political meeting. So I request you to keep this dialogue in that spirit and urge you to keep that promise. Sometimes politics is unavoidable. I think that some discussion to explore what religion can do to address that is also important.


The word hodu in Hebrew

It is the World Council's intention and endeavor to replicate this among the other major religions of the world. What you do here will serve as an example to representatives from the different religions of the world that we seek to bring together. We must expand our global family. Central to the Hindu belief is "Vasudhaiva Kuttambakam", the "World is One Family". We want to envision our world as one family; we are gathered here as one family and I hope we will continue our deliberations in this spirit.

I sincerely thank you all and look forward to having an in depth and open deliberation on some of the subjects and beliefs on which there is so much misperception.

Chief Rabbi, it is my great honor to request you to please deliver the opening address. Following The Chief Rabbi's opening address, we have messages from His Holiness The Shankracharya and from Swami Dayananda Saraswati.

Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar, Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel



"I see a very special significance and bless with great approval such a meeting with the leaders of the Hindu faith"

Our Chairman and our friend Mr. Bawa Jain who organized this meeting, my brothers my colleagues, the Rabbis, Director General of the Chief Rabbinate, and dear honored guests from the Hindu world, you are blessed and welcome here in our Holy City. Something has happened in our time of enormous significance, that perhaps never ever took place and that is, we are able to live in a time when people can come together with different world views, with different faiths and come together to be able to meet in amity and respect and to hear and listen from one another.

It was not so unusual for people of science to come together from different parts of the world, to exchange views, to share perspectives and to learn from one another. But the idea that the representatives of different religions and especially even leaders of the religions would be able to come together in respect and in affirming the dignity of one another and to listen to one another's perspective and to be able to share wisdom together, that is something that never ever happened or was not known of. Perhaps the major factor that prevented or prevents such encounters has been extremism within the religions that has caused such conflagration and distraction, extremism that has burned and has destroyed the capacity to look with depth and with openness at one another, the extremism that has burnt and destroyed the capacity for tolerance and respect. Extremism has been abused in different degrees to the extent that it even became a tool in the hands of extremists to justify there own subjective interests and inflict hostilities against others to justify the unjustifiable and to cause destruction and havoc.

However if we simply seek to point fingers in our analysis and discussion of such activities, this also will not bring about any blessing for us. But what we need to do is we need to rejoice and give thanks to the one source of all, the one power behind the whole creation that we are able today to meet and come together with open minds and open hearts and respect one another in order to be able to work together in a spirit of tolerance and of acceptance and to be able to help contribute to a better world. So we come together to appreciate what we have in common but without in any way dismissing those things that keep us what we are and distinguish us from one another and in this respect I believe that there is a very special blessing that can come from the religious leaders from India. Both because of your experience of religious diversity and tolerance, but also because by

coming here, to where there are conflicts, you can be a source of bridging and of reconciliation between those that are in tension with one another.



Therefore, I see a very special significance and bless with great approval such a meeting with the leaders of the Hindu faith. My request from you my dear and much-respected beloved friends is that you not be too modest and that you recognize the power that you have to be able to be a source of blessings to us. Please do not waiver and be determined and resolute and strong to promote this divine task to be a source of reconciliation between the different faiths, here in this Holy Land and beyond. Through a clarity of vision, that is wise and considerate and can penetrate the foundations and the issues that we have to confront, so that you may help pave the way forward.

When we do things for the true nobility and their purpose to serve the One God, that is the source of all and we seek to promote truth, justice and righteousness, then the Holy One blessed be He, blesses our actions and enables us to be able to fulfill these noble goals. I conclude with a prayer to the Holy One blessed be He, that He would open the eyes of all of us so that He installs upon us blessings of peace and truth and eternal life. Amen.



Baruch – Blessed in Hebrew

Swami Avdeshananada
Acharya Maha Mandaleshwar – Juna Akhada Pithadhiswar



"This gathering will bring about great understanding and will be helpful not only for these two traditions, but the whole world as well"

My respectful greetings to you, Honorable Chief Rabbi Amarji, the Chief Rabbinate and the other members and to the Hindu delegation. In one's life there are moments that are very inspiring for ones self, and there are moments that are very historic for the whole society, whole humanity, and this is one such moment. Such moments become more inspirational when we sit together to understand each other and when we understand each other more, we develop more respect for each other and thereby the whole society benefits.

These moments are very far and few in ones life when one not only thinks about oneself, which human beings do, but one begins thinking about others, one tries to work for others, for the benefit of the entire society, for the benefit of the whole humanity. These moments are really very rare. We are sitting at a such a place, which is one of the Holiest places in the world, the place which has inspired many religions, leaders and religious traditions and this is the place that not only energizes the followers of the traditions, but it gives the energy to us as well.

This land is blessed with great thinkers, great wise people, people who are committed to protecting the traditions, people who have thought of the well being of the world. Not only that, this is a holy place for millions and millions of adherents. They pray day in and day out seeking peace and prosperity, seeking love, seeking energy and thereby spreading right kind of vibrations throughout the world.

There is a saying in our tradition that says the more you discuss, the more you realize the truth. This particular gathering which has begun with the right kind of attitude and commitment, I am sure it will bring about great understanding, which will be helpful not only for these two traditions, but the whole world as well.

We two represent the World's oldest traditions and we have so many things with reference to our culture in terms of literature, art, history and religion. One thing we really appreciate about the Jewish tradition is the industrious and committed approach to life, very focused approach so that their goals are achieved. That kind of commitment and industriousness, I am sure will bring about auspiciousness to the whole humanity.

Generally a human being tends to think about himself and his family only. The paradigm of thinking, of effort is generally confined to his family and himself. In these modern times, when people are more committed to pleasurable objects, to sexuality, to organizing solely for ones joy and happiness, it is again a rare opportunity when like-minded people, the people of wisdom, people of some perception sit together and think about some schemes, some moralities for the benefit for all humanity. I am sure this is an open door to the royal road of human peace. Thereby we will bring auspiciousness, love and peace throughout the globe.

Honorable Chief Rabbi Amar and distinguished delegates, coordinator of the summit my dear honorable Bawa Jain, firstly I salute this land that gives the message of peace, love and service to the entire world. I really admire and appreciate this land. I come from a land of the ancient culture of India, which is the land of the great Himalaya, where the holy rivers like the Ganga, Yamuna, Kaveri flow. We people have love and affection, where plants and animal are also worshiped, where Saints are regarded as God. India has always faced every problem with mutual understanding, love peace and through the weapon of nonviolence.

Today we are living in a cultural malaise and facing a lot of challenges. The whole world is facing the great threat of terrorism. Everywhere there is a fear of violence insecurity and war. The entire mankind is under stress, depression, fear and anxiety. Violence is the only cause behind this. It is violence that is responsible for all this distress and depression. So if we want to save the world from all these kinds of threats and want all around development, then we have to have the spirit of forgiveness, nonviolence, international cooperation and great harmony.

The era of consumerism has made us materialistic; we are attracted more and more towards material goods. As a result we are getting further away from ourselves. We are more and more trying to satisfy our worldly needs which can never be satisfied. The real strength of a human being is purity, truth and tolerance. India for many centuries has been living with all these values. We live with the value of selfless service, for everybody's prosperity, with the great feeling of "vasudhaiva kuttambakam" - The whole Universe is One Family.

The alarming rate of increase of global warming is a threat not only to one nation or one



community but also to the whole world. Even the other creatures of the world are also affected by this great threat. Today mankind is suffering from the problems of anxiety, depression, stress and fear. This is only due to the imbalance we have created in the environment. A single individual, community or nation cannot solve all these problems. If we want to ensure world peace and save life from these threats, then we should work cooperatively through communal harmony, understanding and forgiveness. We have to create a peaceful and livable world. Nothing can survive in this world, each and every thing is perishing, one cannot live forever, but through our good deeds we can remain here forever. We can leave a clean healthy and peaceful environment for our future generation. This is our responsibility. Only those societies and nations have survived on this earth, which have followed the norms of ethical values. Those that have not followed have become weak.

The real strength of every society or nation is the youth, so youth should be disciplined and courageous. They should take interest in development matters rather than going towards bad ways. Today Israel is on the top with values, planning and studies. I admire and appreciate your work. You are visionary and have spread industrial development. Israel is number one in trade and business. It has made its unique identity with its well-developed industry trade and policy in the whole world.

I am very hopeful about this Hindu-Jewish Summit. It is a good start. It opens the door to world peace and communal harmony. I am very thankful to my Acharya Sabha and to Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati Ji and Bawa Jain. We are very thankful to you and we are very happy and comfortable here. You gave a good place and very peaceful atmosphere. This is the land of the divine; it gives strength, power, peace and great aura, so I admire this land, I salute this land and I am very happy to come here.





A special Rudrakasha seed that never perishes, we call it Amar. So we give you this immortal seed. This particular bead has significance that it destroys the evil outside and the evil thinking within and it energizes the person to do more good. That is why all our saints, all our spirituals heads wear this Mala-Rosary.



The World Council of Religious Leaders presents gifts to the heads of the two delegations.



The Chief Rabbinate reciprocates a gift, which is also a reminder of the eternal everlasting nature of Jerusalem. So just as the seed is eternal, Jerusalem is eternal

Gift Presentation











Rabbi Professor Daniel Sperber presented his book entitled “Midrash Yerushalem A Metaphysical History of Jerusalem”



MUTUAL EDUCATION

Chair Bawa Jain,
Secretary General, World Council of Religious Leaders

I would like to welcome Chief Rabbi Cohen. We are much honored that you have joined us.

The purpose of this session is to help increase our knowledge and understanding of each other, on what is important, the significant Holy days and the respective practices. You will observe that we have a lot more in common than we can imagine.

Our intention is first to get a better understanding of each other and then disseminate this further to our younger generations and among the broader Diaspora of the Jews and Hindus. Perhaps people from other religions too can learn a little bit more about the Hindus. For instance, when the Jewish delegation came to India last year, in the opening statement of Swami Dayananda, he said, we believe in the One Supreme Being. Immediately, the Chief Rabbi said oh, I did not know that Hindus also believe in One Supreme Being? That means we can talk! There was a misconception that Hindus did not believe in One Supreme Being. With this clarification and understanding, Hindus are also Monotheistic. Prof. Sperber, who is a renowned scholar, he knows this well as he lived in India, but the common perception is not so.

If we have some points of differences, both sides must be able to sit in a very congenial atmosphere and be able to discuss them. Differences are inevitable. “Diplomacy” always guides us that we can very cordially agree to disagree, but we do it in a spirit of cooperation and civility.

Last year we started our discussions on what is the significance of the sacred symbols to each tradition. What are their practices? We will now seek to expand on that. Chief Rabbi Cohen will deliver the first talk on Transmitting Values through the Jewish calendar. He will be followed by Swami Avdeshananda Giri ji Maharaj.



Transmitting Values Through our Calendars

Chief Rabbi Shear Yeshuv Cohen,
Chief Rabbi of Haifa, Chairman, Chief Rabbinate Commission for Inter-Religious Dialogue



" I believe that peace of the world lies in fighting ignorance and knowing each other"

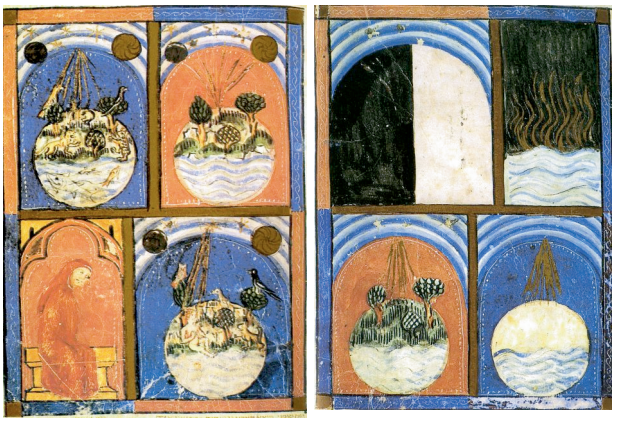
Distinguished Chairman, honorable Swamis, my honored colleagues Rabbis, ladies and gentlemen. Blessed should be those who come in the name of God and bless you in the house of God.

This city, the Holy city of Jerusalem, especially the Temple Mount is a holy city to the three biblical monotheistic religions. I use that additional objective biblical because only three monotheistic religions, which have some differences in opinion, but certainly biblical because Abraham is central for Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Even the name of the city in Arabic is Al-Kuds, which means the Holy City. Christians come here for pilgrimage as Christianity was founded here. It is really a house of God, we believe, since the age of Abraham who was told as a test by the Almighty to bring his child to sacrifice, and he was ready to do so. That was enough, it was only a test and in these mountains you should see God and you should be seen before God. So, welcome to this city.

The subject chosen by the organizers is the Jewish calendar as a way of transmitting the values in which we believe in and we believe that all mankind should believe in. However, I would like to say something about this meeting. As was mentioned before, I Chair the Committee of the Inter-Faith relations of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. We met different times with different denominations of Christianity; Catholics, Anglicans, Protestants. We met with Muslims several times and now we are meeting with Hindus. What is the idea behind this? Why do we invest in time, effort and expenses? What do we want to achieve? I believe that peace of the world lies in fighting ignorance and knowing each other. Something you do not understand, you do not know, you are afraid of. If you are afraid, it brings fear. Fear sometimes bring contempt, sometimes brings hatred and hatred brings wars and bloodsheds. Basically, I believe that the role of religion and faith in advancing the cause of peace in the world is very vital. As we know religion and faith have been and are still reasons for animosity and bloodshed, which we of course deplore but it is a fact. Not too far from your country, India, you know what is happening in Pakistan and Afghanistan and other countries and unfortunately here in the Holy Land and also with the neighboring countries. It is not only political; it is much deeper than that. It is trying to find the thing that can bind us together and put aside the things, which are different. We have

the privilege of being different from each other, we should respect the differences, but we should look at what binds us together. It is amazing how much in common you can find despite the differences. I believe that the values, of which we stand, as presented from the Jewish perspective around the calendar are more forceful and give us a way to hope for a better future for the human relationship with each other.

The idea of time is very relative, I am not a physicist and I am not an expert, but we all know as layman, the relativity of time. Here it is eleven o'clock in the morning; in New York it is only four o'clock in the morning. The most important element in the biblical tradition is the story of creation, and there was night and there was morning, and that was the first day. It was night and it was morning, and that was the second day and the third day. Interesting enough, in the Jewish tradition, we do not have names for every day, we say first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, only one has a name, the seventh day it is called the Sabbath. It is the day of rest that we have, which we believe that God stopped creating, He rested and let us rest. Therefore, on the holy days we stop for meditation, for rest, for religious and spiritual experience, for family relationship and society, this is very important. Sometimes it is more important to know where to stop. In our tradition, "Halacha", the Jewish Religious Law, which comes from the word go, means it does not stay in one place and continue to develop, and you go with it from generation to generation. Our Halacha deems the rest of the Sabbath is a major component in our religion that according to the rabbinic traditions is the basis of all the other Commandments of God. You may know that we have 613 commandments, do and do not do, in the Bible, in the five books of Moses. Every observant Jew is supposed to abide by them.



The creation of the World - Sarajevo Haggadah

In Sinai as we believe, the law was given to us in two tablets of stone by Moses. We believe that every human being is bound by the basics of seven roles. It started with Adam, the first human being in our tradition and was renewed and established finally by Noah after the flood, and those are the values in which we believe, we all should observe as human beings.

The first one is not to worship Idols but to worship God. We must know more about your religion, because from outside I saw that there is only one discipline among many disciplines in India that really believes in One God who created the world. I tried to read and understand and I reached a stage to know that I do not know and then you start learning. Now I think I know what I do not know, so you have to teach us in order to for us to understand the practice of Hinduism falls into the worship of God or, are many Gods. That is very interesting for us and very important.

The second one is moral and ethical behavior in the field of sexual relationship. According to the Jewish tradition, the flood came to the world and destroyed the world because

people have been corrupt in that area. This is one of the three major values for which you should sacrifice yourself. Die and not digress those roles. Sexual relationships, one man one woman loyal to each other, married in a covenant blessed by God.

The third one is bloodshed. If you are told unless you kill somebody you will be killed, because your blood is not thinner, or redder than his blood.

These are the first three values. I am not going throw all seven, but I will mention another one, which is very important, and we learned it from Adam himself. It is a state a society of law and order. The world is guided by organized systems that defend the rights of the individuals, of his property, of his right to life, of his right to work, his right to express himself in a free way and the very idea that the world is not created or given in an anarchy, but there is certain authority whose task is to defend and see that everything is done by the law and order. These are the major seven precepts of our religion and we believe that they should be brought to all the human beings.

The first item on the values in our calendar is as I said the idea of Sabbath. It comes from early Jewish tradition of the creation of the world, but also from the fact that we have been slaves in Egypt some four thousand years ago. For two hundred and ten years, our forefathers have been in Egypt. They started to be welcomed by the king and one of his advisors was Joseph, but then things happened and we became part of the idea of slavery, which is very foreign in the Jewish tradition. Men and women are born to be free. The only bondage is to God, and not to another human being. The idea of having to work certain hours a day, of having a day of rest, and also have to right to change the place of work and not to be bound to it. The first commandment of the Ten Commandments, built the basics concepts of the Jewish tradition. I am the God who took you out of Egypt from the house of slavery.



The crossing of the Red Sea - Sarajevo Haggadah

The second most important part of the Jewish calendar is the spring; it represents not only the spring in nature, but also the spring of mankind. That is the idea of freedom; I am not a slave to anyone else, but to God and to your own conscience. We have a feast in the first month of the Jewish year, which is the month of the spring (not in the present calendar), which reminds that we were freed from Egypt in that month and we should always remember that month. This feast we call Pesach, and the idea is in the lists of the ten plagues that God brought on the Egyptians to convince them to let the Israelites out, was that the oldest child in every house was to be killed,



Pesach, Passover in Hebrew – Sarajevo Haggadah

but God through his messenger spared those who were part of the nation of Israel, so we call that feast Pesach. The Idea of Pesach is again freedom and choice of the Jewish people to be taken out of Egypt by miracle, through the desert through Mount Sinai.

The Jewish calendar is built on two different systems, one is the system of nature and one is the system of history. As I said Pesach, the first Jewish month and the spring is to remember the freedom from Egypt but also the celebration of spring, when you start the harvest of Bali.

The second of the three major Jewish holidays happens in the third month, which celebrates the harvest of the first fruits that we call in Hebrew "Bekurim" which should be brought to the Temple in Jerusalem to be offered to God. As a woman is happy to have a first child, every farmer is happy with his first fruits, so we take it to the temple and offer it in thanksgiving to God.

In the third month of the Jewish year, we have a feast called "Shavuot" which means weeks, it is seven weeks between the feast of the spring and the feast of the harvest, or the feast of the freedom from Egypt and the standing on Mount Sinai and receiving the Jewish law from God. Again the value here is to know that you have a root, you saw with tears and you harvest with joy and it is not you who did it, without the blessing of the superpower of God, you would not have been able to achieve it. The binding together of the first and the second feast or Holiday is very important in our tradition. We count every day in the evening, the first day, the second, until we reach seven weeks, forty-nine days. The fiftieth day is the feast of Shavuot, the feast of the first fruits and the remembering of what happened in Mount Sinai.



Moses presenting the Torah (Laws)
Sarajevo Haggadah

On the fourth and fifth month we have a fast days, mourning days. All these years since the Romans destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem, we keep a day with no eating and drinking starting in the evening. Day of fasting it is called "Tisha b'Av", means the ninth of the month Av, in which we remember Jerusalem, not only now that we are here in Israel but during all these years, more that eighteen hundred years, in every Jewish Synagogue over the world we sit on the ground and light candles and we read the scroll written by the prophet Jeremiah about the destruction of Jerusalem. You cannot understand, Zionism the urge of the Jewish people to come back to this country, it is not political; it is based on a strong and long yearning. In every day we pray to come back to Jerusalem and to rebuild this country. This is where we come from; at least the religious roots come from. It is a value and I believe that it is very important to be conscious of the good things and the worst things that happened to you. The idea of memory, do not forget the good things and the worst things that happened to you, and learn a lessen how to avoid from happening again, and to be thankful to the almighty for the good things.

A very important month in the Jewish year is the seventh month. According to our new tradition, we have the day of the beginning of the year, called "Rosh Hashanah", means the head of the year, or the beginning of the year. According to the Talmudic tradition, we start

counting the months starting not from the spring but from the autumn. A whole track of the Talmud speaks about it. We use the horn to blow; certain sound brings certain values of joy, of fear, of weeping and of rejoicing again. The first day of the year, we believe that every human being in the world has a day of judgment. Once a year, every thing you did is counted, you are brought to judgment, if you are conscious or not conscious, and you pray to be forgiven. Ten days of repentance, between the first day of the year, from Rosh Hashanah and the Day of Atonement, this is the holiest day of the Jewish year. Asking forgiveness, accounting for the good and bad things you did and try to have more good than the bad so you will be chosen for life. One basic ideas of Judaism is called "Tshuva" means repentance, you can repent, and you can change, you do not have to continue in the wrong way.

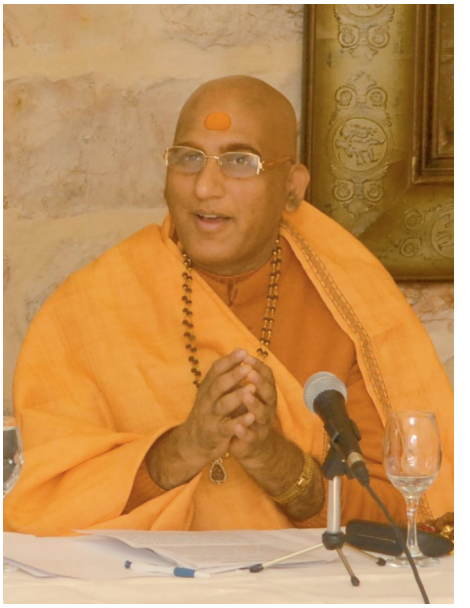
In the seven month is the feast of Tabernacles; in Hebrew we call it "Sukkoth". You go out of your sheltered home into a temporary home that is built of wood and cans to cover it and we stay there for seven days with no protection, there is no lock. You become part of nature and you feel safe. It is to remember the wandering in the desert when we left Egypt and also is the day of the collection of all harvest and bring it back into the home because winter is coming. Again it is celebrating nature and history of our people.

We should educate our selves more to the days of rest and celebration or days of fast and mourning to become better people and better believers in our faith.



The Hindu Values

Swami Avdeshananda Giri ji Maharaj,
Acharya Pithadhiswar – Juna Akhada



"All what you see, all what you perceive or what you experience is nothing but God. When we worship many Gods, we invoke the same Supreme Being we invoke his power, his brilliance and his wisdom in different forms"

Chief Rabbi addressed three main points about the Jewish calendar. The first point was that there is only One Supreme God. Second is the purity in the sexual relations and the third was respect for nature. There are a lot of similarities between our religious values and our calendar and Jewish values, traditions and calendar.

We believe and accept that there is diversity in the creation. The creation has to be diverse; it is a fact that no one can deny. In this diversity or multiplicity, to discover one unity, to discover oneness that is what the goal or the purpose of the human existence is.

The perceptual diversity is a fact, but the cognitive unity is something that a human being needs to discover and know. As Chief Rabbi said there is One God. That is basic, or that is what the fundamental belief of Hinduism is. Our "Vedas" reveals this wisdom through a text called "Upanishad" which in other words is called "Vedanta". This wisdom, which is found towards the end of the Vedas, is expressed in a very famous, very often quoted mantra, "Isha vasyam idam sarvam". All that you see, all that you perceive or that you experience is nothing but God. When we worship many Gods, we invoke the same Supreme Being, we invoke his power, his brilliance and his wisdom in different forms.

What you said about the purity, or honesty to the relationship, same tradition has been followed for ages in India. There is a saying in our Shastra "paradara matrvat", means any other woman except the wife, should be looked upon as Mother. In other words, any other lady should be respected like a Mother. One should be loyal; one should be faithful to one woman or one husband throughout life.

Just as the Chief Rabbi said when the first harvest, or the first fruit comes, the farmer is happy and that is offered to God. So also in our tradition, when the harvest is collected, the farmer offers all that is produced to God. Not only we offer the harvest, we offer our children also to God. When the baby is born, the baby is taken first to the temple and he or she is offered to the Lord. We have the names, first names implying that the baby is nothing but the blessings of the Gods and Goddesses. Like the very famous name "Shiva Prasad", prasad means blessings; so this person is a blessing of lord Shiva; "Durga Prasad", is the blessing of Durga. So we not only offer the crops, but anything that we have, anything that we produce, even the houses we always offer to the Lord. Houses are

named as the places where the Lord resides, and with this offering it becomes a “Prasad” we call it, Prasad means a gift from the Lord, Prasad means the glorification of the blessings of the Lord. When we look upon things like this, they are pure for us, we see the Lord and then there is no fear for us.

Since we find a lot of similarities between the Jewish tradition and Hindu tradition and since we are here with a very open and honest heart to work for this unity, I am sure that this is an open door for the royal road of unity and harmony of the whole world. Since this dialogue is the second step and began with very good atmosphere, with mutual respect in spite of the differences. We respect your freedom and we expect that you respect our freedom and with this attitude, I am sure this dialogue will go a long way and we will have some concrete plans to work together for the whole humanity.



Swami Pramatmananda,

Secretary, Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha



"We do not say there is one God, we go a step further, Hindu tradition says there is Only God"

I would like to share the views of the Hindu tradition about the concept of God. Each individual, or for that matter each religious tradition, has there own personal concept of God.

In our tradition we say, "isha vasyam idam saryam", all that I see and we perceive is the One Supreme Being. It is not only one particular mantra; we have thousands of mantras expressing this fact. That whatever you see, whatever you hear, is nothing but the expression of the One Supreme Being. We do not say there is one God, please understand, we go a step further, Hindu tradition says there is Only God. As I said it is not something we believe in, it is something we understand. Therefor the Vedanta or Upanishad is called a pramana, a means of knowledge. Every teacher makes the student "see" this fact. I used the word "see" quote - unquote, meaning he makes him understand this fact. The whole universe is nothing but an expression of God.

Though this is a long process I shall address for you a very important question which I find is not being answered by the other traditions regarding The Creator. Many traditions accept that there is One God, omniscient, omnipresent, and he or she created this whole universe, but the question arises, How did he create the universe? Another question is, To create this universe, did he get the materials from something outside of himself? If I say yes, it is outside himself; obviously it is a self-contradictory statement. If it is outside himself; who created that material? Our Shastras - Scriptures are very clear about it. They say God not only created the creation, but he created it out of himself. So the very Creator and the Created is One. Our Vedas give a beautiful example from our day-to-day experiences, like our dream. In my dream, I create my dream; the material for the dream world is also me. So not only he created, he is the creation which means he became as the very creation.

This has been the understanding and the vision of Hindus. The whole creation is God and therefore, everything is sacred for us. Understand, We do not worship an idol; we worship God in all these forms. An example, if I want to greet you, I can greet you by giving you a rose, I can greet you by hugging you, I can greet you by shaking hands or someone can greet me by patting my back or by touching my hand; but whatever part of myself if it is greeted, it is a greeting to me, the whole me. Similarly, when the whole creation is nothing but the expression of the God, anything that is worshiped is nothing but the worship of God. That is what our tradition is. Therefore we respect rivers, we worship mountains and

we have a number of manifestations of God. All the forces are symbolized as nothing but the expression of God. For that matter, you will find number of ways we worship God.

Every human being needs a symbol, even now we have some symbolic idol worship, when we salute our national flag, it is not a salute given to a peace of cloth, it is a salute to the nation's pride. Similarly, when we do some Puja, it is nothing given to that particular object; the attitude is the ultimate surrender to that Almighty, that One God. All our scriptures talk in one voice, whether one worships Ganesha or Shiva, Krishna or Rama, they are all the expression of the same God. Very famous examples that have been given in our traditions, there maybe number of hermits, but ultimately it is One God. Similarly there is a number of forms and names we have, but it is ultimately only one formless Supreme Being who is expressed as many forms. That is why I repeat when we say there is only God, everything is worshiped and everything is respected, not only the things as Swami Ji said, things that are offered to God, in our vision, our body is looked upon as a manifestation of God. This body is inherently regarded as good. It is the same conscious principle, which resides in all of us and therefore when we worship an object, it is only a form of respect to God. So, we respect anything and everything and for us whole creation is something to be respected, something that is pious. So there is no idol worship in our culture. Though it is said we are worshiping idols, but it is the worship of God through these different forms.



The Ganges River,
by Arbind Lochan, www.flickr.com/photos/arbind_lochan/3364655834

OPEN DIALOGUE

Rabbi Ratzon Arussi,
Chief Rabbi of Kiryat Ono

We greatly appreciate this meeting and see it as great blessing. I am not sure that we can reach an understanding today with regards to all aspects of the philosophical principles, but I am more interested in reaching an understanding on the practical aspects of our respective religious life style.

We have common perceptions within our traditions regarding time as been made up of past, present and future. We are two people with great antiquity and therefore the past is of great significance for us, but the past, we both believe must animate our present and direct our future.

In this regard I just want to mention one thing. We are here at Mount Zion Hotel, Just opposite or across the way from our Holy Mountain. According to our Hermeneutic tradition, the first human was created out of the earth that was gathered from that place on the Temple Mount, and this site here expresses the unity between the earthly dimension and the transcendence of the astral dimension of a person that is the soul.

The goal of our religious practice is to be able to elevate the earthly, the physical to the transcendent celestial dimension. This is what we are striving for. Because we are physical beings, we make mistakes, we fall back and if we have the process of repair and of atonement that was traditionally associated with the Temple and offerings. Rabbi Cohen spoke about the concept of repentance as the tool to be able to restore ourselves that we can continuously strive, to reach the spiritual heights and the transcendent level that expresses our transcendent souls.

The people who live in this land are all descendent from Abraham. But it is important for us to go back further and recognize that we all come from sources, as our Bible teaches us, that is the origin of all human beings. In other words, we all have that communality. Therefore, in recalling this and going back to the past, we will draw inspiration for the future so we learn to live as part of one family, respecting each and every human being.



Rabbi Professor Daniel Sperber
Bar Ilan University



"One of the great achievement of our first meeting in Delhi was when we signed together a declaration clarifying what is not understood by most people, that Hindus basically are a Monotheistic religion as is Judaism, Christianity and Islam"

Today we heard a very lucid explanation of what we do not usually understand from our point of view. Two points I would like to make. The first was your description of the nature of God and creation, the fact that the Supreme Being created creation out of himself; therefore everything in the world is basically a part of the creator. We say that God is not only transcendent, but he is also omni present, found everywhere, each person has in him self the spark of Godliness and holiness. Your description with great lucidity is almost identical to the philosophical description that was given by one of the great theologians and philosophers in Judaism, Moses the Son of Maymon. There are different opinions, but this notion that there was no primordial matter that existed outside the Godhood which he used to create the universe, but the universe was as it were an extension of his own being whatever that being is, is a notion that is expressed by Monotheism clearly and is one of the principles of faith that he formulated. Your description is something that I think almost every Jewish person can accept as it was expressed. That by it self is an important point. I could have said it perhaps less clearly to Jews than you have said it in a way, which shares a great similarity between this philosophical notion in Hinduism and in Judaism.

The second thing is the reason that there is a general misapprehension as to the notion of Hinduism being a polytheistic religion with Idolatry is a semantic one according to your description. You speak of many Gods and then you say that basically they are not Gods but they are just an expression of the Supreme Being. If there was a different term used other than Gods, for these instances through which one can bring about an understanding of a partial conception, since our human perception is always limited and flawed, if there was a different word other than the word Gods to distinguish between the Supreme Being and all the other Gods in inverted commas, we would not be troubled by this miscomprehension. So I feel that over here basically we have a semantic problem rather than ideological, philosophical or theological problem. If this were clarified educationally, people would understand that basically Hinduism believes in One Supreme all presence Being, and all the others are only instruments or reflections or means through which one can achieve some partial understanding. This I think would perhaps help towards a greater understanding of what Hinduism really is.

Oded Wiener,
Director General, Chief Rabbinate of Israel



It is very interesting and extremely understandable and it is acceptable by us as Rabbi Sperber said. Your description is much deeper than most of the people can understand. All these multi names of God may confuse the simple people. When you talk to your believers, do they understand the meaning, that actually all the symbols are one God, the only God, can they understand it or they accept the symbol as God itself?

Chief Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen
Chief Rabbi of Haifa

I agree with my colleague Rabbi Ratzon Arussi that I do not think we should go into elaborate discussion in the definition of our deity. We know that there are differences between our approaches, but the values we can share and benefit from each other because I do not think that we should try to say that basically there is no difference, there is a difference and we respect the differences.

In one point we had in the Jewish history a very bitter development, one Jew spoke about Pantheism, which means God and the world are one, God and nature are one. He was excluded from the Jewish tradition. Later days, the late Chief Rabbi Kook, who believed in Pantheism, which means everything is in God, and there is no place empty of God, he said it in Aramaic expression “Sovev col almim, male col almim”, means transcendent and eminent. Literally means he encompasses all worlds and is encompassed by them. So there is a difference. Islam and Judaism share one thing in common, for them, there is only one God. They do not even have other names for any other Gods that are manifested by him. We have a committee that meets every year with leaderships from the Vatican; the Holy Trinity can be construed as God manifested himself, but also can be construed there are many Gods, three of them, The Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit. So we have a difference there. The purity of the concept of monotheism gives itself to different expressions and both of us feel that we should not add anything to the One, the One only.

I must say that I was surprised to learn that behind the many names of Gods that you find in India, there is one Supreme God.



Swami Paramatmananda Saraswati Acharya,

Secretary, Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha

We have very famous mantras about what the Chief Rabbi just said. There is no place without God, nothing empty of Him and He is beyond. We also say He is omnipotent and transcendental. There are very famous mantras called “purusha suktam” that say he has pervaded all creation, he is in all the creation, but by Himself, He is beyond as well. So the transcendental is accepted. Not only it is accepted, we say that transcendental is God and the omnipotent is his expression. So there is nothing away from God. Since we do not see anything away from it, for us everything can be worshiped. So we worship mountains, we worship rivers, we worship animals; we look upon these as an expression of God.

Coming back to professor Sperbers statement, it is maybe because of my limitations in English language. In our language, we have two words to differentiate between the two. The Supreme Being we call it “Ishwara” and these idols whom we worship, they are called “Devata”, which means manifestations. One of the ways we worship God is called “Vishnu”. The word Vishnu itself means everything. Everything is Vishnu and that Vishnu is what? Again the word explaining it “sarya-rupa”, means all forms and beyond all forms.

What you have said, that very consciousness in every human being, is God. Expressing that particular fact, again we have a number of mantras in our Vedas as well as our famous text called “Bhagavad Gita”, in which Lord Krishna tells Arjuna, “I am the very conscious principle who resides in each



and every human being". When you look upon others this way, when you understand this, there is no question of hatred. It is the same I here, which is there. Another famous “shloka”, verse, in “Bhagavad Gita” chapter 13 says that this is what we see in every living species, not only human beings. The very conscious principle is the same God. Therefore, born out of this understanding, our culture tells us to be vegetarian. We respect that principle, that he is the very conscious being. Beginning from the smallest creature onwards to the biggest, whatever it is, it is the same conscious principle that manifests in the whole creation. Another example that is given is that of an ocean. You may see a number of waves, some are big, others are small, but the wave is nothing but the expression of water. Similarly, this whole creation is the glory, like the waves are the glory of the water, whole creation is the glory of one single principle.

Concluding, that principle is formless. That is the ultimate realization. Though we begin with a form, though we worship the form, the ultimate thing we have to realize is that formless being which is within, and all around, and above us.

Rabbi Yosef Azran,
Chief Rabbi of Rishon LeZion

Two months ago we were in India. Every time I think of India I remember and automatically associate with a great man by the name of Gandhi. I admire him greatly as a human being, as a social phenomenon, as somebody who struggled for justice and freedom from oppression, against violence. I have no doubt that the message that he brought from the sources of his own culture, will be great source of blessing to India, and India would indeed reach growth, and there are already signs of it, and realize that vision. Though we have to recognize that it has to grapple with serious challenges coming from material success and that people very often only assess value in material and in financial terms.

The tragedy of history is too often those who spoke in terms of peace and reflected the most noble aspect of there traditions, were assassinated by those of much more extreme limited perceptions. Not only with Gandhi, personality like Martin Luther King in America, in our history too there have been some terrible examples amongst our own people, going back to the assassination of the prophet Zachariah, who was murdered by our own because we didn't want to hear his warnings.

I am increasing the challenge that you have received this morning from Rabbi Amar. A nation that has such an important value of Non-Violence and promoting peace has a special message to the world. We urge you to be a source of blessing for us, because we here face a very significant challenge. In many parts of the world, which come from violent approaches towards us, even seek to deny our legitimacy to be here and to be able to live here in peace. Therefore from a nation that extolled the virtue of Non-Violence and peace, you can be a source of great blessing to us. If your message can emanate outwards to the nations of the world, especially to those who seek to threaten us. We look forward, we pray for your support in this endeavor to have the resources, the power and the vision that comes from your heritage joins together with us.



Swami Madhav Priyadas ji

Head, Swami Narayanan Gurukul



Since we looked upon the whole creation as expression of God, all our Hindu society has no objection of worshiping God in any given form. So Hindus always accommodated other traditions, followers of other Gods. The Jewish people who were there in India where also accommodated and respected. Since everything is God, what Chief Rabbi has mentioned, we respect all traditions, not only "Sannyasis" which means monastic, a common man also respects other traditions because of this particular reason. That is why, Jews were never persecuted, and they were always respected in our country.

I feel that you have endured a lot of sufferings. I have seen that you have a special art, when you are faced with suffering; you convert the suffering into success. Hence this is not only a Holy Land, it is a divine land of power and energy. Indian traditions have a long drawn strength of spirituality. Since we have the longest spiritual tradition, this meeting of the two oldest traditions here, I am sure will give a long-standing message of peace and harmony to the world around.

In retrospect, let me use the word "Ishwara", the Ultimate and the many manifestations, to show the right kind of relationship, I can give one example to explain the relation between "Ishwara", God and the creation through this particular rosary. There are so many beads here and only one thread connecting all the beads. Though we do not see it, but it is the thing that connects all the beads. The thread that connects and unites all the beads, which is imperceptible at the moment is like God and the beads are his various manifestations.

There is only one Supreme Being, Ishwara. The principle is one, and each and every living being, from human being to the end is nothing but its reflection, one many in a mirror. Though he resides in each and every living being, as far as spirituality is concerned, the human being is the noblest or the greatest. The soul is eternal, that is what the Jewish traditions say and that is what our traditions say. Eternity is translated in our language as "Amar" and the Chief Rabbi's name is the same.

There are a lot of similarities between us and we have some differences too, but we respect you, and expect the same from you. Despite the differences we are one, expression of one principle, like the thread, having different beads in the rosary, but ultimately it is one. Since the ultimate reality is formless, we cannot perceive it, therefore it is very difficult for a common man how to relate to it. We need some symbols, like for the ones who do not live in Jerusalem, people here can worship looking at this Holy place, but those who are away, symbolically they face the same direction, implying they are worshiping here. Similarly, symbolically we have a number of idols, implying that we are all worshiping the same reality the ultimate Supreme Being.

Rabbi David Brodman,
Chief Rabbi of Savyon

I would like to thank the almighty, for the occasion that we are here to speak and listen to you, because we, the rabbinical council, had meetings in Rome and in Jerusalem with the Cardinals. We made a point of it not to talk about theology, we only spoke about things that we have in common. Yet I thank the almighty, today we diverted a bit from that principle.

Several prophets, our prophets, spoke about, the coming of the Messiah, before the redemption of the world, as if God asks us to speak the truth, "Dabru emet". Again and again the prophet says you want that I bring peace in the world? Dabru emet, speak the truth. We Jews, thought about the Indians, that your religion has to do with idol worship and today we hear, and not only hear, we are learning something very important. Again, I must be careful because my mentor the Chief Rabbi had said we must be careful because of the differences we have. But to hear things which are so clear and so clarifying, we think that we made a mistake.

I would like to stress one sentence, which we say and I hope my colleagues agree, every morning and a few times a day, we say "Shemah Israel, Adonai Elohenu, Adomai Ehad". Hear Israel, our God is One. But it says, Elukeinu in plural! Elukim, the word God is in plural, Gods. We do not worship, we do not give power to the various expressions of Gods. When we speak about Elukim, Elukim is actually God. My people from my community sometimes say how do we call Gods? There are no Gods, there is only one? But here, I think we understand what you are saying. There are angels, they are expressions of God. There are animals as you say.



I would like to ask you, because we are very near to each other, when you say that you worship, do you give power, absolute power to that expression of Gods, or you say it is just an expression of God without the power? When you pray to it, you do not pray to the animal, you pray to the almighty? Am I saying right?

Swami Avdeshananda Giri
Acharya Maha Mandaleshwar, Juna Akhada Pithadhiswar

We do not pray to the animal or to the physical manifestation, but we pray to the almighty, or the unspeakable, or the un-understandable almighty in this form.

Anuja Prashar
Scholar journalist

I would like to say the word worship itself, in the semantic of using English takes away what we are trying to say. When we recognize divinity everywhere even within ourselves, when we worship we connect with that divinity. So it is not in the being or in the form that we are actually observing that divinity or energizing.

When you say, do you give power? We do not give power, we do not take power, we connect with the power and that is the form of worship.

Swami Paramatmananda Saraswati Acharya,
Secretary, Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha



We have a few symbols also, which we look upon as expressions of the Supreme Being; symbols not only in terms of forms, but sound symbols, like "Omkara". When we say "Om", we look upon it as a sound symbol.

I request our Jewish friends to appreciate this fact that svastika also has been, for generations, as a symbol of the Lord. For not only centuries, but for thousands and thousands of years svastika is a sacred symbol for us and in every house and every village if you go, you will find this. Even on marriage invitations it will be printed. I request our Jewish friends to appreciate our position.



Rabbi Dr. Nathan Lopez Cardozo
Dean of the David Cardozo Academy for Jewish Studies and Human Dignity

I have been reading about Hinduism over the last few years. What I find extremely interesting and fascinating, and reminds me of our own tradition, is the tremendous amount of diversity within Hinduism it self. For an outsider it is very difficult to understand how that can work. You do not seem to have a doctrine or a dogma, in the sense that we find for example, in Christianity. There is a similarity here with the Jewish tradition, because we also do not have final dogma. There is a lot of discussion if there are dogmas. A famous Jewish philosopher, Mendel, who said the only dogma within the Jewish tradition is that there is none.

When I read about your tradition, you do not have conversion, neither do we have conversion. We believe that there is a possibility of finding the truth also outside this particular tradition as well.

I wonder how that works within the polarity of ideas, which seems to come about? Do you have a council where people of totally different concepts or ideas about Hinduism come together? How do you decide? Is there is a kind of majority in certain moment? Is it in your beliefs that you are different and in your actions you are very similar? Or, are there big differences and disrespect as well?

R. Venkatnarayanan
Legal Secretary, Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha

We do not have dogmas in the sense and the term, which is understood elsewhere. We have plurality of understanding of the truth. Different interpretations of our Vedas are there and they find different persuasions, they coexist with each other with great mutual respect. The interpretations are different and that interpretation can be different is accepted not tolerated. We have a forum in which the various persuasions, that is precisely our Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha. So far there has not been discussion of this nature, probably because the teachers believe that it might not be required, not necessary.

PRESERVATION OF TRADITION IN MODERN SECULAR SOCIIETY

Chair Rabbi David Rosen,
President, International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultation (IJCIC);
International Director of Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee (AJC)



"Because the pressures that we have faced historically have paradoxically, even in our suffering and difficulties in a way served to protect us against precisely the world that was antagonistic towards us"

I would like to make a connection between the subject this morning and the subject this afternoon. It was very interesting that Swami Madhav Priyadas ji referred to the concept of the moon, the fact that it is "Sina" in Sanskrit, the connection with Sinai and the Moon. Our Calendars are both lunar calendars, and our ancient Rabbis two thousand years ago saw the moon as a metaphor, a very important metaphor, because the moon wanes, it get smaller each month and then it waxes, and it gets bigger and then smaller and then bigger. They saw it as a metaphor for the Jewish people that even though they grew through adversities and maybe even diminished, they managed once again to recover and come back again in beauty and in light. But the light of the moon is only reflected light; the source of the light is the sun. Therefore, our light, to the degree that we have our light, is only the degree that is reflected from God almighty and through his revelation. The Torah, is the light that we reflect just as the moon. In that sense, there is another reflection as we see ourselves both connected by the lunar calendar and also having faced different challenges.

Now we get into the challenges that are probably the biggest challenge of all time, the modern age in which we live. Because the pressures that we have faced historically have paradoxically, even in our suffering and difficulties in a way served to protect us against precisely the world that was antagonistic towards us. Today, if you like, the challenges, if I may use the metaphor, my colleagues will understand from our biblical tradition, it is the "kiss of Esau", it is the opportunity that we have and the openness that threatens our ability to be able not only to survive but to be creative. This is the real challenge before us in our time.

To address these challenges that both our communities face, how to preserve the tradition and still be a part of the modern world? A world, which often has values that are diametrically in conflict with our own, and still to be able to serve it, and to be a blessing to it, causes a big question. We can only touch a little bit on that, but we certainly know that we have the right people to introduce this discussion, this meditation on our behalf and it is my pleasure to call upon Rabbi Profesor Daniel Sperber to be followed by Swami Paramatmananda, to address the challenges in preserving our tradition, in our modern society.

Rabbi Professor Daniel Sperber,
Bar Ilan University



"So we are translating our own terminology into what we see to be equivalent words in English and they are not really equivalent. When we hear these English words, we hear them with a completely different connotation"

Before we address this subject I would like to go back to our former discussion because I felt that it was so very important, so very cardinal to any kind of mutual understanding between the two religions. What became clear to me, you will see that it will be related to what I will say afterwards, is that we have over here a very strange situation. The situation is that both of us, both groups of people basically come from completely different linguistic culture. Our culture based on Hebrew, your culture is based on Sanskrit and Prakrit languages, and we are communicating with one another in English, which again has a totally different cultural background. So we are translating our own terminology into what we see to be equivalent words in English and they are not really equivalent. When we hear these English words, we hear them with a completely different connotation. That became clear to us, when we spoke about the use of the word God, Gods, as opposed to Devas, as opposed to manifestations. Prayer or worship as opposed to connection, or perhaps invocation, or some other type of term. Also we personally are probably troubled by the word idol, which was perhaps translated into the term symbols. All these words that we have been using in a somewhat incorrect fashion, because they do not translate our terminology in an accurate fashion are the cause of misunderstanding. These misunderstandings that we have seen between ourselves but now we have reached an understanding. We have to find alternative terminology that is mutually understandable and mutually acceptable, in order that we can really bridge the theological and ideological gaps between us. I think we have a similar situation within our own society.

Judaism obviously has a theology, a philosophical theology. We mentioned briefly the great theologians in monotheism Moses Ben Maimon, who actually in his early years formulated a dogma, thirteen principles of faith. It is interesting to know that in later works he never mentioned, he never referred to them and I am not even sure if he thought that each one of these thirteen were actually something that each Jewish person has to believe in. There were certain basic notions which he thought were basic notions that every Jew has to believe in. Such as the unity, the omniscience the presence of God, which we mentioned both as transcendental and as omnipotent Supreme Being, the fact that he created the world not out of any preexisting matter, a point of controversy among others, but basically, Judaism is not a particularly dogmatic religion, as was quoted by Mendel Cardoza. We have very little in the area of dogma. There are two basic concepts, the concept of intention, thought intention and the concept of deed action. In Hebrew we say "Kavana ve maase". In Judaism there is no doubt that the action plays a greater role, more

dominant role than that of the intention. That is not to say that one should not have the good intentions, that is not to say that one should not have righteous thoughts, but the deeds that the man, that the human being does, basically that is what he is judged on, if we think in terms of judgment.



We have what we believe to be a divinely given rule book, a book of statutes, the Pentateuch, the Bible, the five books of Moses, which we believe Moses received divinely at Mount Sinai. It was mentioned earlier this morning by Rabbi Yashuv Cohen, there is a tradition of six hundred and thirteen Commandments, Statutes, "Mitzvot" in Hebrew; they can be divided into two major categories. One category is those Commandments which relates to the relationship of man and his creator, between man and God and those which are mainly ritual issues, whether they be sacrifices, whether they be the sort of actions that take place in the temple, or the synagogue and so on. The other category of commandments, which is between man and his neighbor, we call socio-economic rules and regulations, for how society should be run in a righteous and proper fashion.

Now within the hierarchy of the philosophy of our legal system, it is clear that there is a great emphasis put upon those statutes, those laws, those commandments between man and his neighbor, than those between man and his creator. Take two examples, a man who sits all day long praying to God, a holy man; he does not communicate with anybody, he does not teach anybody, just concentrates on God all day long. Another man is a simple person, who does not sit in a cave, who does not contemplates on the nature of the universe, he does not try to communicate with the greater spirit, he does charity, he helps people, he tends to the sick, he goes to hospitals, he visits poor people, he does charity. How would we judge two such personalities? It is not up to us to give judgment; we are not the people that weigh the degree of righteousness. But in a general understanding of the Jewish thought, there is no doubt that the person engaged in pious deeds is no less righteous than perhaps even more so than he who spends all his day merely in contemplation and good thoughts. So there is a great emphasis on deeds that relate between man and his neighbor, between helping ameliorating a situation in this world. In other words, to a certain extent, earth bound, at the same time we realize that there is a relationship to heaven if heaven is a figure of speech of the divine.

There is a challenge that is facing us from the newly emergent way of thought that developed in modern times. These are complex challenges. Not nearly the challenges of freedom, which can come to a situation of anarchy, which means the rejection of any sort of compliance to a legal structure, do what you wish, according to your own conscience, or according to the conscience people have imbued in you, which is one problem. Ultra liberalism which leads to alternative life styles, the break down of the family unit which was mentioned by Rabbi Yashuv Cohen, the sanctity of the family unit between a man and wife, which I understand is also a point of great importance in the Hindu religion. Now

days we have completely different models of so called family life which have come out though the spirit of ultra liberalism that is come to in our day.
There is also the challenge of auto rationality. We live in a world of the computer, computer works on the basis of a plus and a minus, or one and zero. Apparently, any sort of calculation can be done if it is broken down into this sort of component of a plus and a minus. The most complicated computation, which would take human beings millions of years, can be done in a nanosecond through a computer. That is to say we have brought up a generation that believes that every question, every situation, everything in this world can be reduced to a plus and a minus, and can find an auto rational solution. This leaves very little space, very little area for spirituality. It does not leave us with an idea of something that we cannot explain.



We have come into a situation where everything should be theoretically explicable. There is no scientist who believes that we can find the formula, which can solve, in one single formula all the worlds' problems of physics. So the notion of the unquotable being, one that is beyond the understanding, one who is not subject to human logic. The way we have it is something that is difficult to the modern youth, who have been brought up and educated in such a passion to accept. Given this auto rationality on one hand, the liberation, of the constraints of a system which is a constricting legal system, even legal system which is not constricting based on basic norms and ethics, this is also been cast aside. So it is very difficult now days to even know what is right and what is wrong, what is moral and what is immoral.

There was a time when ethical principles and ethical ideas were likened into a ladder. You had things that were in the bottom that were evil, that were bad, unacceptable, and things which were on the top, which were good, righteous, piety. Now days there is a concept which is spectrum, everything is on the same level, from one end into the other, there is no way of building a series of priorities, all thing are more or less expectable. This is what we call moral relativity, each society has a completely different notion of moral values. The fact that it has been a casting off of structured life, a development of the auto rationality, the ultraliberal way of thinking, what we call moral relativity, has brought tremendous challenges to those who have a long tradition, a tradition which is spiritual and not rational, ethical not ultraliberal and has a clear system of priorities that is ethics and is the theological thought which is also been cast aside. Also tradition is ancient, and since it is ancient it is non-existent, and since it is non-existent, it is out of date. We do not have to do and think and practice in the same way as our parents or our forefathers did. There was a time when there were little differences between generations, one generation was fairly similar to the next, there was respect for parents, there was respect for teachers that which the parents and the teachers gave over to the children was accepted and passed onto the next generation.

Now days, perhaps because of the tremendous rate of change, in our society, the rate of change which has been accelerating, there was never anything similar to it in past times.

Now days there is a cultural gap even a linguistic gap between parents and children, between one generation and another. My children are brought up on a computer and they do not know how to react with and pencil virtually, they sit in front of a keyboard. We were taught the tables, none of them know the tables, and they have a little calculator, they say we do not need to, and I say how you are going to know your change? They say well there is that little machine that did it. Even the music that they hear now days, I find it noisy. I do not find it is musical. There is a tremendous generation gap between relatively short periods of time, twenty thirty years, and I am sure I was very different to my own parents and I also thought differently. So when there is a cultural gap, when there is a generational gap, parents cannot teach there children because they are using different terminology and thinking in a different way, everything for the children has to be modern, nothing can be antiquated, tradition therefore is something that is out of date, outlandish. These are the challenges that I think face us.



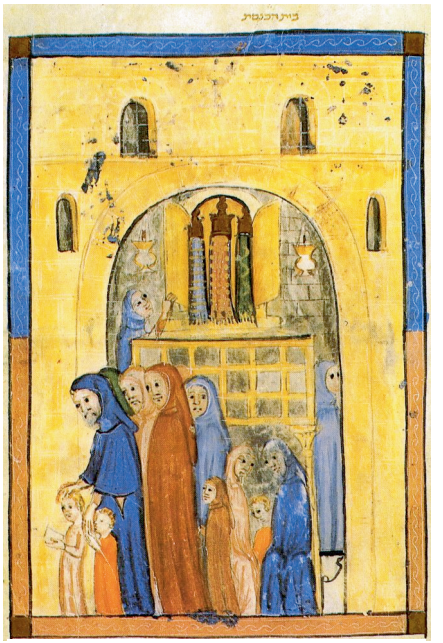
One of the things I think is very important again, children and parents are not speaking, and they are using the same words, the same language with different meanings. In the same way two different cultures are using the same words with other different understanding of the meaning. One of the things that we have to do when we think about educating our children for the next generation is to learn how to use language in a way that is understandable to them and to realize that linguistic and semantic changes are taking place. Secondly, I think it is very important that they understand that there is something that is beyond the rational. The truth is that auto rationality needs time where everybody sits behind the computer with a keyboard and with machines stuck in there ears that gives them information from all over the world, or music from everywhere in the world. They are aware of the fact that this is not all the reason of humanity. They are aware of the fact that there exists a whole realm, which they have been not given the antennas to catch them. They do not hear those waves, that is the reason why there has been a wave of new age, new age means mysticism, Kabala, it means going to India, sitting in an ashram after going to the army in Israel.



There is a need from the part of our youth to fill the void which has been created in there heart due an education which is ultra rationalistic de-ethicized and without serious clear priorities in life. Since they have not been given the priorities, they seek it in other worlds, a world that is alien to them and because they are alien, they are interested. Then antiquity becomes something of fascination for them. It is true it is out of date, it is archaic, but it is interesting. We have to return and reinvest our education with an understanding that the world is not nearly purely rational machine that works like a clock. We have to teach them there exists a whole universe which is unseen, which is not understood, which is incomprehensible, which does not give you answers to the questions that you raise but answers

the questions with additional questions, which means that these are real questions and they have to be rethought, a system of ethical values which has serious priorities. We have to reintroduce the ladder and try to break down and cast away the spectrum. I know it is a tremendous challenge, and it is a challenge every educator faces. We have to go about it by relearning the original texts, by learning them in the language in which they were written, by sharing the depth and the richness of the heritage of each of our traditions, whether it is a Sanskrit or Hebrew or Hebraic tradition. If we can re-stress these three elements, the element of spirituality, being more than the material life that they come comfortably be in contact with. The fact that there is something that is super rational and the fact that there is really a series of priorities in our ethical values, if we understand this, then I think we will be able to reenergize our own basic traditions. Our own traditions contain all these things, our heritage is rich in a way it is understandable even by us ourselves in many ways. We study them and the more we study them we see that there are additional depths. We never reach the real depth, we never reach the ultimate understanding of them, and we just try to go one step further each time. If we can begin to peel away the materialistic skin that is sort of, it's like a cataract in the eye, something that blurs our vision, if we can peel that away and open there eyes to the whole additional spectrum of ideas.

Sometimes I say to people that are not privileged and do not believe whether by believing in God that they are like people that are kind of blind, they see everything in black and white. They cannot appreciate the beauty of nature. They think that what they see is what is there. We know that there is more than that we know that there is a whole world of color, a spectrum of depth. They see things in two-dimensional fashion; we see things in three-dimensional fission. I feel in many cases our youth have been educated for various reasons, which are not good reasons, to be kind of blind, they have this cataract film in there eyes. We must find an educational cure for this and peel away the films in front of their eyes and show them that there exists a whole world of color, of depth and spirituality.



Synagogue, from The Sarajevo haggadah

Swami Paramatmananda Saraswati Acharya, Secretary, Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha



"Indian culture, Indian upbringing always emphasized on the duties rather than the rights"

Our tradition is primarily based on our scripture - Vedas. Our culture and all our festivals and customs have the roots in the Vedas. The goal of human life, of human existence as looked into the Vedas, which gave us a particular life style that we call it as "Verenash Dharma". Our society was divided on terms of role and sociological make up, this division was primarily given to us, so that we may fulfill the ultimate goal in life, mainly discovering the ultimate spirit, The Lord or Ishwara. To achieve that, our tradition has always been emphasizing on the word "Dharma", Dharma has a very wider meaning in our culture. Though today it has been limited to religion or a belief system but primarily Dharma means a duty based life. Indian culture, Indian upbringing always emphasized on the duties rather than the rights.

With this modern connectivity and modern exposure, we too find the same problem that people are becoming less and less duty conscious and becoming more and more right conscious. Secondly, there are many duties spelled out. Beginning from Matrudeva, look upon the parents as God in the world, to the duties to our society, duties to our family, duties to our nation, but with materialism coming into our lives, we find that our youth are more prone to enjoyment and making a life of merry.

Our family unit, which used to be the joint and extended family, you will be surprised to know that it extended to the whole village. Even now, not only to the first cousins or second cousins, the whole village was looked upon as a family. This is slowly changing to a narrow immediate family system. Slowly children are getting away from their parents and becoming independent and not knowing the spirit of these various forms, which our culture has in terms of celebrations in terms of certain Vedas, they tend to adapt to these modern forms. These are the problems we also face.

We think that the alienation to the tradition is out of ignorance. In a real sense our country is secular, so our education system does not have any inbuilt mechanism to educate our children about our culture, tradition and religion. They learn from these Swamis who are sitting around. They keep traveling; they keep moving and giving public talks and use other modern ways of communicating, other ways of passing on the message. They learn it, but then, we have a problem. Since it is voluntary exposure, so most of them are unaware about it and most of them are getting alienated from our traditions and off late this need has been felt and our religious leaders are slowly coming up with different modules of reaching out to the society so that they may know what is right in our traditions.

Swami Chidananda Saraswati Muni ji

"Respect is the first value in the Indian tradition"

The other challenge is the youth wants us, but we have to find solutions, whether with the government or without the government. The first solution is going back to our roots.
We have to bring together the Internet and inner net, only then we can face the challenges of the modern world and maintaining our tradition.

The family is the first school not the teachers, they come last. You are with them only for a few hours. The second is the Mother. Respect is the first value in the Indian tradition. Who is the first in line to respect; first respect is not given to God; not given to the Acharyas, but given to Mother, "Deva Matri Bhava". As Pujya Swami Ji mentioned the moment he opened the door "Matri Deva Bhava", see your mother as divine, adore your mother as divine. Mothers have to understand their importance; Fathers have to understand their importance. As our learned scholar Rabbi said in the morning. When I think of India I think of Mahatma Gandhi, when I think of Mahatma Gandhi, I think of his words, "You must be the change you want to see in the world". You must be the change is not we want to see, we want the change in them and we keep preaching to them.







Visiting The Knesset (Israel's Parliament)



Meeting with Minister Issac Herzog

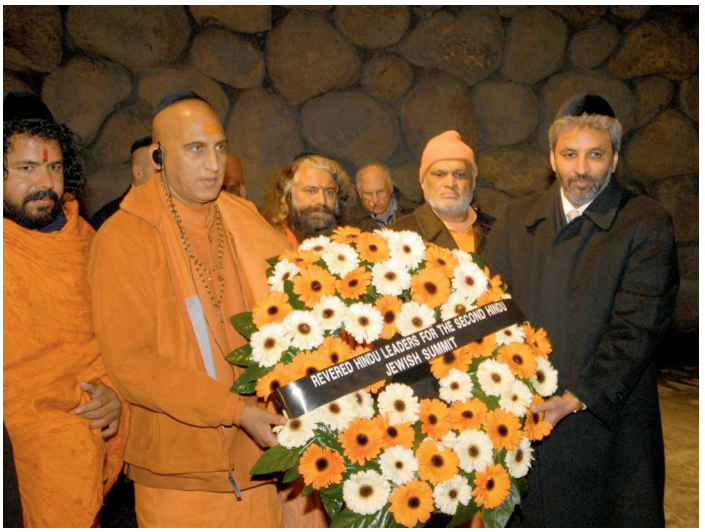


Dinner hosted by The American Jewish Committee (AJC)









Visit to Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum









Meeting with M.K. Majali Whbee, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs







Lunch, hosted by DDG and Head of the Asia & Pacific Section, Ministry of foreign Affairs











Audience with President Shimon Peres





Meet with local dignitaries and religious leaders from the region

Daliat el Carmel
A Druze town









Bahai Center Haifa





The Mayor of Haifa, Mr. Yonah Yahav and its Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen hosted a meeting with the heads of religious communities and local dignitaries



Ahmedi Center





Farewell Dinner Hosted by Dr. Aaron Ben Zeev, President Haifa University





Tour of Jerusalem on a snowy day







2nd Jewish-Hindu Leadership Summit
Jerusalem, February 17-20, 2008

Sunday February 17

Arrival	Check in to Mt Zion Hotel
19:30p.m.	Opening Dinner, Mt Zion Hotel

Monday February 18
Breakfast in the hotel restaurant

	Opening Session
08:45a.m.	Welcome & Orientation: Rabbi David Rosen
09:30a.m. –	Greetings & Opening Statements:
10:30a.m.	Mr Bawa Jain, Sec. Gen, World Council of Religious Leaders
	Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar, Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel
	Swami Avadhesanand Giri Maharaji
10:30a.m. –	Coffee break
10:50a.m.	
10:50a.m. –	First Session: Moderated by Mr Bawa Jain
12:30p.m.	Mutual Education: Transmitting Values Through our Calendars
	Jewish Presentation: Chief Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen
	Hindu Presentation: Swami Avadheshanand Giri Maharaj
12:30p.m. -	Lunch:
	Greetings from Chief Rabbi Yonah Metzger, Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel
13:30p.m.-	rest/free time
15:00p.m.	
15:00p.m.-	Second session: Moderated by Rabbi David Rosen
17:00p.m.	Preservation of Tradition in Modern Secular Society
	Hindu Presentation: Sri Swami Paramatmananda Saraswati
	Jewish Presentation: Professor Daniel Sperber
17:30p.m.	visit the Knesset, Israel's Parliament
	PLEASE BRING YOUR PASSPORT WITH YOU FOR SECURITY CHECK
18:00p.m.	meet with H.E. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert
18:30p.m.	meet with Minister Isaac Herzog
19:00p.m.	meet with M.K. Menachem Ben Sasson, former Rector of Hebrew University
20:00p.m.	Dinner hosted by the American Jewish Committee (AJC)
	with the participation of leading members of the Israeli Indian communities

Tuesday February 19
Breakfast in the hotel restaurant

07:30a.m.	Depart the Hotel
08:00a.m.	Visit Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum
09:30a.m.	Depart for Ministry of Foreign Affairs

PLEASE BRING YOUR PASSPORT WITH YOU FOR SECURITY CHECK

10:00a.m.	Meeting with M.K. Majali Whbee, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, at the Foreign Ministry
11:00a.m.	Tour of the Old City of Jerusalem
(11:00a.m. – 13:00p.m.)	(Scholars group at AJC)
13:30p.m. – 18:30p.m.	Lunch, hosted by DDG and Head of the Asia & Pacific Section, the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Kohinoor Restaurant, Crowne Plaza Hotel
15:30p.m. – 16:15p.m.	Conference on Religion & Ethics
depart for audience with President Shimon Peres	
18:00p.m.	Address of Swami Dayananda Saraswati deliverd by Swami Paramatmananda at the Conference on Religion & Ethics
20:30p.m.	Dinner - Mishkenot Sha'ananim

Wednesday February 20

Breakfast in the hotel restaurant

09:00a.m.	Depart for the North
11:30a.m.	Daliat el Carmel, a Druze town; meet with local dignitaries, and religious leaders from the region
12:15p.m.	lunch – Darna Restaurant, together with dignitaries and religious leaders
13:45p.m.	The Bahai Center, Haifa
14:45p.m.	Assembly hosted by the Mayor of Haifa, Mr Yonah Yahav and the Chief Rabbi of Haifa Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen, together with the heads of religious communities and local dignitaries
15:45p.m.	The Ahmedi Center
17:00p.m.	check in at Dan Panorama Hotel
19:00p.m.	Farewell Dinner - special guest: Prof. Aharon Ben Zeev, President, Haifa University

Thursday February 21

07:00a.m.	depart for airport.

PARTICIPANTS

Jewish Delegation

- **Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar**, Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel
- **Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger**, Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel
- **Chief Rabbi Shear Yashuv** Cohen, Chief Rabbi of Haifa
- **Mr. Oded Wiener**, Director General, Chief Rabbinate of Israel
- **Chief Rabbi David Rosen**, President, International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultation (IJCIC); International Director of Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee (AJC)
- **Rabbi Professor Daniel Sperber**, Professor of Talmud and Jewish Studies at Bar Ilan University
- **Rabbi Ratzon Arussi**, Chief Rabbi of Kiryat Ono
- **Rabbi David Brodman**, Chief Rabbi of Savyon
- **Rabbi Mordechai Piron,** Former Chief Rabbi of Israel Defence Forces
- **Rabbi Dr. Nathan Lopez Cardozo**,
- **Rabbi David Bigman**, Yeshivat Ma'ale Gilboa
- **Rabbi Yechiel Wasserman,** Head for Jewish Communities, World Zionist Organization
- **Rabbi Dov Maimon**, Fellow, Jewish People Planning Institute
- **Rabbi Yosef Azran,** Chief Rabbi of Rishon LeZion
- **Rabbi Yosef Gliksburg,** Chief Rabbi of Givatayim

Representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel

- **Mr. Yaron Mayer,** Director for South East Asia
- **Mr. Bahij Mansour**, Head, Inter-Religious Affairs
- **Mr. Salih Abu-Tarif**, Assistant, Inter-Religious Affairs

Hindu Delegation

- **H. H. Swami Avdeshananda Giri**
  Acharya Maha Mandaleshwar, Juna Akhada Pithadishwar
- **H. H. Swami Nirmalanandanatha**
  Representative of Jagadguru of Adi Chunchungiri Math **H.H.Sri Swami Balagangadharanatha**
- **H. H. Sadhu Madhav Priyadasiji**
  Head, Swami Narayan Gurukul, Gurukul Vishwavidya Pratisthan
- **Sri Swami Vishveshwarananda Maharaj**,
  Mahamandalesvar of Sanyas Ashram, Haridwar, 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 Samvidananda Saraswati**
  Maha Mandaleshwar, Kailas Math, Nashik
- **H. H. Swami Paramatmananda Saraswati Acharya**,
  Secretary, Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha, Sampradaya: Sankara
- **Swami Chidananda Saraswati Muni ji**
  Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh
- **Sri Venkatanarayanan**, Legal Secretary, Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha
- **Dr. Martha Doherty,** Scholar and Asistant to Swami Dayananda Saraswati
- **Ms. Sheetal Shah,** Hindu American Foundation
- **Ms. Anuja Prashar**, Scholar and Journalist
- **Sadhvi Brinda Rao** Scholar and Assistant to Swami Dayananda Saraswati
- **Sri Rammurthy Govind Hari**, Administrator, Pushpagiri Sankara Math
- **Mrs. Gawri Govind Hari,** Wife of Mr. Rammurthy Govind Hari
- **Sadhvi Bhagwati,** Assistant to Swami Chidananda Saraswati Muni ji
- **Sadhu Ramsukh Das,** Assistant to Sadhu Madhav Priya Das ji
- **Ashotosh Mohan Gupta,** Assistant to Swami Avdeshnanda Giri

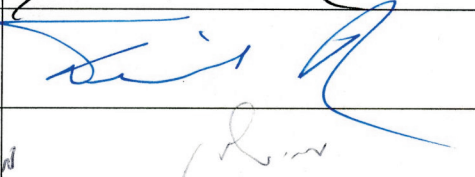
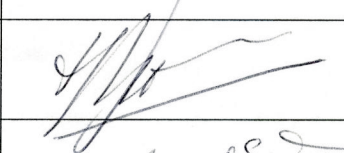
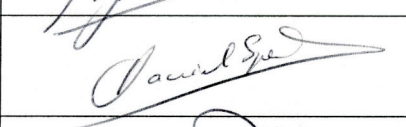
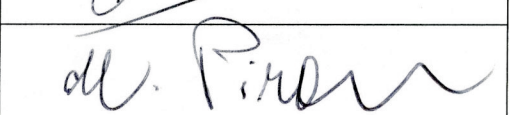
Observers

- **Deepak Mittal,** Indian Embassy, Tel Aviv
- **Bodhaswarup** Chaitanya, Disciple of Swami Dayananda Saraswati
- **Sharon Rosen,** Wife of Rabbi David Rosen
- **Priya Tandon,** American Jewish Committee
- **Dawn Baillie,** Disciple of Swami Chidananda Saraswati
- **Avril Promislow,** Assistant to Rabbi David Rosen, AJC

World Council of Religious Leaders

- **Sri Bawa Jain**, Secretary General, World Council of Religious Leaders
- **Dr. Hana Totary-Jain,** International Adviser, World Council of Religious Leaders

2nd Jewish Hindu Leadership Summit
Jerusalem 17-20/2/2008

Name	Signature
1 CHELOMO MOSHE AMAR	
2 Oded Steiner	Oded Steiner
3 Swami Avdheshanand ji	
4 DAVID ROSEN	
5 ARYEH RASSON	
6 Rabbi David Brodman	
7 Rabbi Prof. Daniel Sperber	
8 Chief Rabbi M. PIRON	
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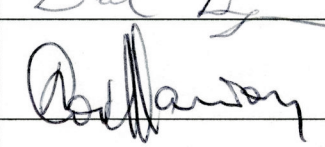
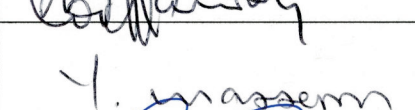
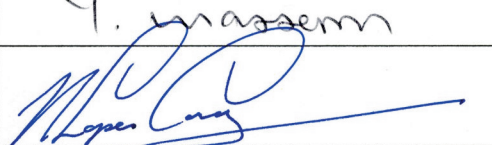
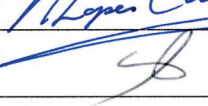
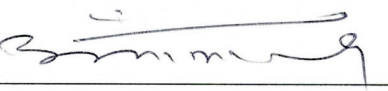
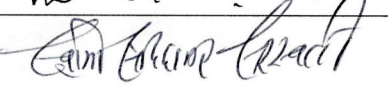
10 Dov Maimon	
11 Yechiel Wasserman	
12 RABBI DR. NATHAN LOPES CARDOZO	
13 salih Abo-tarif	

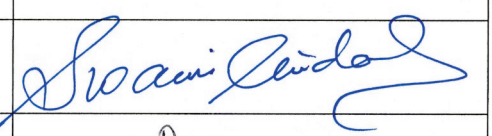


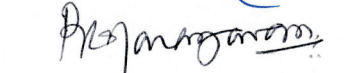


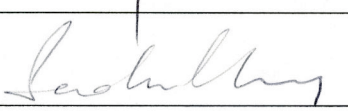




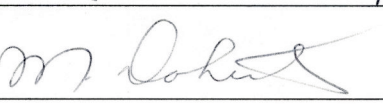






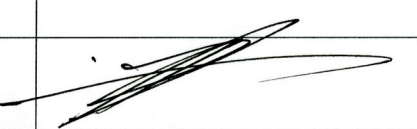


Name	Signature
14 DAWN BAILLIE	
15 SWAMI VISHVESHWARANAND	
16 Paramatmanda Saraswati	
17 madhavpriyadas	
18 स्वामी संविदानन्द सरस्वती	
19 SWAMI CHIDANAND SARASWATI	
20 R. VENKATANARAYANAN	
22 SADHVI VANDA CHAITANYA	
23 Martha Doherty	
24 R GOVIND HARI Rep. Sankaracharyas	
25 ANUJA PRASHAR	
26 Sadhvi Bhagwati Saraswati	Sadhvi Bhagwati
27 S. Ramsuyji	Sadhuvam Sukdas
28 BODHASWARUPA CHAITANYA	
29 PRIYA TANDON AJC	
30 SHARON ROSEN	

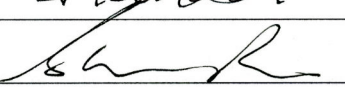












	Name	Signature
31	Hanan Potay-Zaim	
32	Sheetal Shah	
33	Deepak mittal	18/2/06 1000 hrs
34	Yaron Mayer.	
35	Gowri Govind Hari	
36	CHIEF RABBI SHLOMO MOSHE COHE	
37	RAV. YOSSEF. AZRAN CHIEF RABBI - RISHON-LEZION	
38	R Yosef GLIKSBRG GIVATAYM	
39	YONA METZGER	
40	Harsh Hemendhez	
41	BAHIG MANSOUR	
42	BAWA JAIN	
43		
44		
45		
46		

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

Conclusion and Future Directions

Bawa Jain,
Secretary General, World Council of Religious Leaders

The Hindu-Jewish Leadership Summit's have been a source of tremendous inspiration. Barriers of a few millennia have been broken down. Intrinsic beliefs and knowledge of the World's two oldest Religions, the Hindus and Jews, hitherto not shared, is now being transmitted across the world. This is historic!

It is our intention and commitment to advance this initiative by engaging the Diasporas of both the Hindus and Jews around the World. We must educate the communities on this historic break through, to seek ways of cooperation at all levels, to publish books for broader circulation that will serve to be an instrument of education with specific references from each of their sacred scriptures, thus enabling the adherents to be better informed of the beliefs and practices. We must develop curriculum, establish Institutional relations, establish a Think Tank to explore specific areas of collaboration and assess where and how we may support each other, organize ongoing meetings and exchanges, all this as a corollary to and in light of the rapidly growing relations and strategic alliances of India, Israel and USA.

For the leadership of this initiative, we have many to thank – The Chief Rabbinate of Israel, The Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha, American Jewish Committee and all their leaders, staff and colleagues. We are very grateful to The All India Movement for Seva, Arsha Vidya Gurukulam and the Forum for Religious Freedom for their contribution.

The wide dissemination of what was accomplished will determine the success of this initiative. This will inevitably mean that we must strive to engage and partner with many more like minded Organizations. We must broaden our outreach. This augurs well for the future relations and cooperation of these two great religions.

This is the motivation that guided us to launch our "Religion One on One" initiative. Let us together be a beacon for peace and harmony. The religions of the world have the power and resources to mobilize the masses as never before. Let us utilize technology to educate and inspire the masses to rid the world of the social evils that plague humanity. We are One Human Family!

It is the commitment of The World Council of Religious Leaders to build upon this initiative by engaging all Religions. We can and must strive for our sacred Religions to be a progressively more active partner for Peace. We must disavow all violence in the name of Religion. This is the spirit that animated the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders at the United Nations in 2000 and one that we must continue to nourish.

We are committed to "Building an Integrated Framework for Peace"!

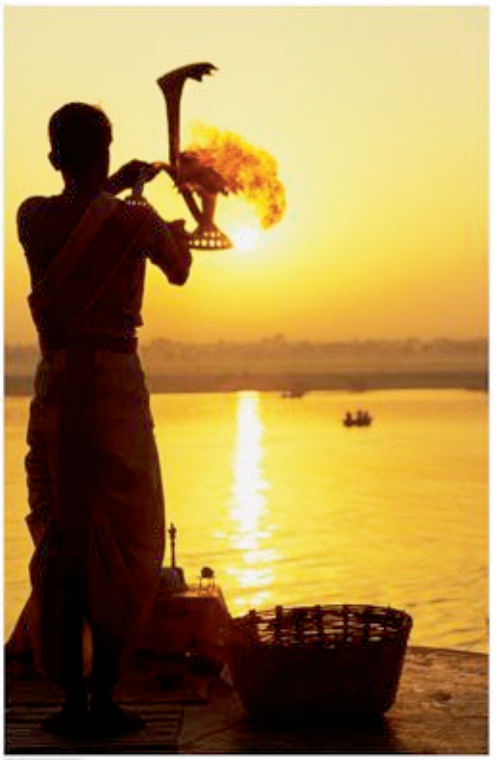


Declaration

1st Hindu – Jewish Leadership Summit

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.



He who sees me in all things, and all things in me, is never far from me, and I am never far from him.

Lord Krishna from Chapter 6, Bhishma(P. Lal); also part of Bhagavad Gita

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart.

Deuteronomy 6:4-6



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