



Today is the first day of Av. Nine days from now we will recall the destruction of our two ancient temples. One of the reasons given by the classical Rabbis for the destruction was the *averah* - bad act – of *sinat chinam* – internal strife among the Jews. Today two actions occurred that increase our concerns.

1) The bill will now proceed to the Knesset for action which requires a series of three readings. Attached you will find a note on the subject from yesterday authored by the IMPJ and Masorti Movement leadership. During the day Sunday a conference call was held that included the leadership of ARZA, IMPJ, URJ, RAC, IRAC, USCJ, RA, CCAR, JAFI, and JFNA. A letter was prepared and hand delivered to Prime Minister Netanyahu Sunday night in Jerusalem. The letter and other materials on the subject are attached.

2) This morning Anat Hoffman, Director of the Israel Religious Action Center, was arrested for carrying a Torah at the Western Wall. An article on the subject is attached.

In spite of the overwhelming opposition by a powerful majority of Jews worldwide, the new conversion bill - that moves full control over who is a Jew in Israel from the State to the Orthodox Rabbinate - advanced through committee to a vote in the Knesset. Up until now, conversion in Israel has escaped the ultra-Orthodox monopoly. Because there was no legislation dealing with it, conversion was run by the state. Israel's Supreme Court, an arch-defender of pluralism, has consistently confirmed the validity of non-Orthodox conversions. Prime Minister Netanyahu can stop the Rotem Bill. But now, with the passage of this bill, the 18th Knesset threatens to change the definition of "who is a Jew" in Israel forever. From now on, the power to perform conversions would rest solely with the Chief Rabbinate – which only recognizes ultra-Orthodox conversions.

If we don't stop this new conversion bill now, we lose recognition in Israel of Reform and Conservative conversion forever.

What can you do?

1) Call and email your nearest Israeli Consul General. The message is clear; Prime Minister Netanyahu must withdraw the Rotem Conversion Bill now. At a time when Israel is fighting against many who call her illegitimate, it is wrong for Israel to delegitimize so many Jews around the world.

2) Follow your call with a personal letter to the Consul General. Suggested draft attached. The message is clear – The Rotem Bill creates a central Jewish religious authority vested in the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. There has never been one central Jewish religious authority nor should there be. Each Jew is free to follow the dictates of their heart and their view of the Jewish tradition.

If you click on the link to your consulate it will take you to the local consulate webpage.

[Atlanta](#), Consulate General of Israel, 1.404.487.6500

[Boston](#), Consulate General of Israel, 1.617.535.0200

[Chicago](#), Consulate General of Israel, 1.312.297.4800

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[Los Angeles](#), Consulate General of Israel, 1.323.852.5500

[Miami](#), Consulate General of Israel, 1.305.925.9400

[New York](#), Consulate General of Israel, 1.212.499.5400

[Philadelphia](#), Consulate General of Israel, 1.215.546.5556

[San Francisco](#), Consulate General of Israel, 1.415.844.7510

[Washington](#), Embassy of Israel, 1.202.364.5500

[USA NY, Israel Mission to the U. N.](#), 1.212.499.5510