



## iRep - Israel Religious Expression Platform

### What is iRep?

- ❖ The Israel Religious Expression Platform, iRep, is a new JFNA initiative that works to encourage respect for diverse expressions of Judaism in Israel. iRep was formed as an outcome of the Global Planning Table initiative.
- ❖ iRep's mission is to impact a range of issues related to increasing religious pluralism in Israel. Through education and awareness building, support of organizations, and sustained and systematic communication between North American and Israeli leadership, iRep will act to enhance Israel's civil society and to strengthen Israel's relationship with North American Jewry based on mutual recognition of and respect for diverse Jewish expressions.
- ❖ iRep strives to promote and advance meaningful change to the religion-state status quo, including expanding the range of legally-recognized options for marriage and divorce in Israel.
- ❖ As part of Federation, iRep has a unique added value since it brings together around one table many organizations to form a substantial entity involved in advocating for greater pluralism and freedom of expression in Israel.
- ❖ 13 Federations and 2 foundations have already invested in iRep including: Ann Arbor; Boston; Cincinnati; Colorado; Greensboro; Kansas City; Los Angeles; MetroWest; Miami; New York; San Francisco; St. Louis; and Washington, D.C.

### Why is this important?

- ❖ In Israeli society there are diverse Jewish congregations and ways of expressing Judaism: from secular Judaism, Reform, Conservative, modern Orthodox, Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox. But unfortunately, Israel as a state, grants official status and legally binding power over religious matters only to the Orthodox Rabbinate. Expressions of Jewish life common in North America, do not receive equal status in the Jewish Homeland.
- ❖ This ongoing reality impacts North American Jews who fulfill the Zionist call, make Aliya, and then are deemed not Jewish enough to wed in Israel. The wider implications are that this reality negatively impacts the willingness of younger North American Jews to engage with Israel, since many find it harder to identify with a state that doesn't guarantee equality for different choices of religious expression.
- ❖ Many Israelis support creating alternative ways of legally marrying in Israel and believe that there is more than one way of being Jewish. The lack of change on these issues creates a growing distance between Israelis and their Jewish identity, which, in a global society, may encourage looking for settlement opportunities in different countries, where there are less personal tolls to pay.
- ❖ Creating positive change for recognition of diverse forms of Judaism in Israel strengthens Israel as a Jewish and democratic state and fortifies its existence against ever-present outside threats.