



28 Tamuz 5778  
July 11, 2018

**BY OVERNIGHT MAIL & E-MAIL**

The Honorable Benjamin Netanyahu  
Prime Minister  
State of Israel  
3 Kaplan St. Hakirya  
Jerusalem 91950

The Honorable Yuval Steinitz  
Member of Knesset  
Minister of Energy  
216 Yaffo Street  
POB 36148  
Jerusalem 91360

Dear Prime Minister Netanyahu and Minister Steinitz:

Recent press reports in the wake of the resignations of three members of the Knesset from their service on the “Kotel Committee” indicate that you will be the ones taking the lead in determining the future of the “egalitarian prayer area” on the south side of the Kotel HaMaaravi.

We represent Am Echad, a wide swath of American Orthodox Jewry. As you may recall, we brought a group of some forty members to meet with Israeli Government officials this past February. We were well received by you, Mr. Prime Minister, and by President Rivlin and numerous Cabinet and Knesset members. At that time, we discussed our commitment to Israel in action and thought. We recounted the growth and youth of our constituency. And we asked that when the Israeli Government consults with Diaspora Jewry, we be part of that conversation.

One such time is now. American Reform and Conservative groups are pressuring your government to create a larger, expansive and expensive prayer area on the southern end of the Western Wall. Some among those groups want even more than that. Plans have been circulated to reconstruct the entire Kotel Plaza to give them more space and visibility. All this is for groups whose members rarely come to Israel, much less to the Western Wall.

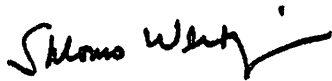
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During our mission last February, we repeatedly heard statements from government officials, ranging from anger to disappointment, over how Reform and Conservative leaders are agitating in Israel while refusing to address the truly serious problems of their own dwindling numbers and assimilation in America.

As you consider the future of the Kotel Plaza, we respectfully urge that the views of committed American Jews, those who come regularly to pray at this most holy site, be considered seriously. The Kotel Maaravi has been the single most unifying place in the Jewish world. Please don't balkanize this holy place for the sake of those whose only interest is to try to demonstrate their relevance rather than use this *makom kadosh* as a place of heartfelt prayer and connection with the Creator.

As you have seen, ministers of your own government cannot bring themselves to undermine the longstanding custom of this holy area. We implore you to follow their lead and maintain the *kedushat HaKotel* as it always was and always should remain.

Sincerely,



Shlomo Werdiger  
*Co-Chair*  
*Am Echad*



Dr. Irving Lebovics  
*Co-Chair*  
*Am Echad*