



Meet Israeli Reform Rabbis

Rabbi Ezra Ende



Community Position: Founding rabbi of Kehillat Hadoror since 2010

Ordination: HUC, Jerusalem, 2006.

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Photo By Dale Lazar

City/region: I work in Jerusalem, in and around the Kiryat Hayovel neighborhood. This is a very diverse area in socioeconomic, social, ethnic, and religious terms, and the neighborhood has become more ultra-Orthodox in recent years. Many of our activities take place in the public domain, thereby exposing a pluralistic, egalitarian, and open Judaism that is alien to most of the local residents. The peak of our annual programs are the large-scale egalitarian Hakafot held every Simchat Torah in the center of the neighborhood. We work in 'Tali Bayit Vagan' School, which is identified with the Reform movement, and I also serve as the rabbi of the school and pre-schools.

Special activities in my community: Kehillat Hadoror holds regular prayer services; a community Beit Midrash; children's activities, and other programs. We also have some unique community activities:

- **Shirat Hadoror communal garden** appeals to all the residents of the area, who grow and nurture vegetables and flowers in the garden. We also hold Kabbalat Shabbat and festival programs emphasizing the agricultural side of our Jewish and Israeli identity.
- **Community Shabbat morning outings** being with a brief morning prayer service and end with a communal lunch.
- **Festival events in cooperation with the community center** appeal to the

general public in the neighborhood and are held on the High Holidays, Purim, and Shavuot.

Formative event in my history: In 2006–2010 I served as an assistant rabbi at Temple Sinai in Pittsburgh, PA. During this period I learned a lot about rabbinical and communal service and experienced a wide range of lifecycle ceremonies on the intensive level that is typical of a large and dynamic Jewish community. I am grateful for the opportunity I had to learn about myself and to grow as a person and as a young rabbi.

Dreams for personal and professional future: I have always wanted to be a community rabbi accessible to local residents and serving as a tool enabling them to connect to the spiritual dimension of their lives and to pluralistic, egalitarian, and open Judaism. Although the political and public struggle is important, I believe that it is personal bonds that open gates for Reform Judaism in Israeli society.

Unusual experience in the Diaspora: My exposure to interfaith couples in Pittsburgh was a very enriching experience. This was a new encounter for me, since I grew up in Israel in an atmosphere that regards this issue with suspicion. I met some wonderful people and learned how meaningful it can be to open the door to interfaith couples, and how much the Jewish community has to gain in spiritual and human terms from these families.

A gift I would like to give to my peers around the world: I would like to give my peers in the Diaspora an opportunity to experience a taste of building a young community in Israel that is working to influence diverse areas of public life in Jerusalem and to promote open Judaism in an era when the pluralistic character of the city is under threat. I invite you to establish a presence in Jerusalem, and my community and I will be happy to serve as your home in the Holy City and the State of Israel.