



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 11 to 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 (WCROL) 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.