

Milestones in the Struggle for Egalitarian Prayer at the Kotel and the Robinson's Arch Initiative (HaKotel HaMasorti)

1980 and Forward	Masorti-Conservative Minyanim, mixed - egalitarian, gathered and davened without interruption in the upper Kotel plaza (on the edge of the public area) several times each year, primarily Tisha B'Av and Shavuot.
1997 Shavuot	Members of the Masorti- Conservative Minyan, davening in the upper-Kotel plaza, were attacked by Haredim who threw bottles, diapers, and excrement, experiencing both physical and verbal violence. The police escorted/pushed our group outside the Walls of the Old City.
1997 Tisha B'Av	The police had promised to protect the daveners of the Masorti-Conservative Minyan in the upper-Kotel plaza, but, bowing to the demand of a representative of the Ministry of Religions, declared mixed prayer (men and women praying together) to be in violation of Israeli law and ordered the worshipers to leave the plaza. The Maariv prayers continued as the police surrounded and pushed the group toward the Dung Gate. Several worshippers were injured. The davening continued outside the Dung Gate.
1998 Shavuot	The Masorti-Conservative worshipers, who had gathered early in the morning, were attacked by Haredim who cursed them and hurled rocks at them. The police again pushed the daveners "for their own safety", out through the Dung Gate.
1998 Summer	The "Ne'eman Commission (originally established to deal with matters of conversion expanded its original mandate) suggested that the "Robinson's Arch" site be prepared as a site for prayer for Women of the Wall and the egalitarian Minyanim of the Masorti Movement. The Women of the Wall and the Reform Movement rejected the proposal while the Masorti Movement accepted it.
1998 Tisha B'Av	Several days prior to Tisha B'Av, in light of previous police behavior and with the encouragement of Diaspora Jewish leadership, Government Secretary Yizhak (Buji) Herzog contacted the leadership of the Masorti Movement in order to establish the first Masorti-Conservative Minyan, with government support, at Robinson's Arch.

2000	The first agreement between the Government and the Masorti Movement regarding davening at Robinson's Arch was signed: once each week, up to 100 people could come to pray. "With the responsibility and readiness to reach a compromise and to dialogue, and to limit friction and confrontation which could, heaven forbid, escalate to bloodshed, we have decided to accept the proposal, for a 12 month trial period, to hold prayers at the southern end of the Kotel, rather than in the main plaza. This is a great day in the struggle for religious pluralism in Israel, a day in which the government accepted the principle whereby every Jew has the right to pray at a site holy to the People of Israel, in keeping with his/her custom."
2004	The Robinson's Arch agreement was expanded adding a second day each week for prayers.
2006	The Robinson's Arch agreement was expanded and extended for three additional years: daily minyanim and, with prior coordination, Erev Shabbat, holidays, and other special occasions. Over the course of the year 46 Minyanim prayed at the site – some 1,000 daveners in all.
2007	316 Minyanim prayed at the site – some 9,200 daveners.
2008	448 Minyanim prayed at the site – some 12,600 daveners.
2009	480 Minyanim prayed at the site – some 20,000 daveners.
2010	The start of negotiations with the government to expand the Robinson's Arch agreement - the area for prayer, the hours for prayer, provision for ritual needs, and staffing.
2011-2013	A plan to expand the area for prayer at Robinson's Arch was presented by the government, following intensive negotiations with the leadership of the Masorti Movement and the Government Secretary Tzvi Hauser, with the imprimatur of the Municipal Planning Committee and the District Planning Committee.

2013	The Sharansky Plan for an egalitarian prayer area was presented in general terms to the world Jewish leadership.
2013 August	Naftali Bennett, Minister of Religions and Minister for Jerusalem and Diaspora Affairs, erected a temporary prayer platform ("The Bennett Platform" or "Ezrat Yisrael") which is open to all 24/7. Mixed reactions.
2013-2016	Intensive negotiations under the auspices of Cabinet Secretary Avichai Mandelblit, with the involvement of the Jewish Agency and JFNA, aimed at achieving an agreement acceptable to the Masorti Movement, The Reform Movement, Women of the Wall, the Rabbi of the Kotel and the Ministers of Religions and Justice.
2016 January	Summary of the agreement: One "Western Wall" with a single entryway and two prayer plazas, one northern and the other southern; the span of the southern prayer plaza shall combine the Houser and the Bennett plans; there shall be a governing board to be chaired by the Chairperson of the Jewish Agency with representatives of the Israeli government, the Conservative Movement, the Reform Movement, and Women of the Wall; the budget shall be provided by the government and administered by the governing board of the egalitarian plaza. The agreement is set for approval by the government on January 31, 2016.