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## The UAE's Jewish Community Thrilled Over Peace Deal with Israel

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*The UAE's chief rabbi, Yehuda Sarna*

Tuesday, 25 August 2020 | The improving relations between Israel and the Gulf state [United Arab Emirates] has been felt in both countries, no more so than by the UAE's Jewish community, who has become much more free, vocal and prominent in the country.

During June, the UAE's Jewish community released a prayer in Hebrew in honor of the leaders of the UAE.

A few days later, over a hundred of Dubai's Jews attended the biggest virtual *Shabbat* [Sabbath] gathering the Arab world has ever seen, led by the UAE's chief rabbi, Yehuda Sarna, and the president of the Conference of European Rabbis, Pinchas Goldschmidt.

In his first-ever interview with Israeli media, the leader of the UAE Jewish community, Solly Wolf, described to Ynet in great detail the everyday lives of some 2,000 Jews who live mainly in the capital of Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

"We were surprised by the timing, but we knew it was coming," said Wolf during a recent interview. "We have been feeling more free for a while now, but even more so now. We kept a low profile in the past, but over the past year, the authorities have given us permission to open synagogues."

According to Wolf, the change in the way the Jewish community is perceived within the UAE is immense.

"A few months ago, some might have had an issue if you were seen walking inside a mall with a yarmulke on your head," says Wolf. "Today there is no issue with that whatsoever. You see ultra-Orthodox Jews walking around the street with a Tzitzit [tassels] and no one says a thing."

The agreement between Israel and the UAE means that travel between the two countries will finally be possible, and according to Wolf, the locals are very excited.

"Just like the Israelis are excited to visit the Emirates, the people of the UAE are extremely happy they will now be able to visit Israel, Jerusalem and the Dome of the Rock. They are also excited they will be able to welcome Israeli tourists and businesses without any problems."

Wolf adds that the UAE also presents vast financial opportunities to Israelis.

"Dubai is an emirate with a lot of money," says Wolf. "Israel is a country with vast technological accomplishments in agriculture, medicine, high-tech, cyber. Israel has many things for which they will find buyers here."

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