

## The Role of the Chief Rabbi

### 1. Ruling of an Israeli Court of Appeal in case 21629-10-15 (Nov 16 '16)

...They appear before students and schools. The rabbis also visit wounded IDF soldiers, and those wounded in acts of enmity [=terrorism], and they conduct visits of comfort for the bereaved families.

The Chief Rabbis act as well in the international arena, and in representing the country in interfaith forums and various events across the world. This, in addition to their role as heads of the rabbinical court system in Israel, and as judges in the Chief Rabbinical Court. It is also noted on the website [of the Chief Rabbinate] that the chief rabbinate serves the Diaspora not only as a spiritual authority for halachic questions, but also as a central resource for information for all Jewish communities and all kosher-supervising agencies around the globe. From this it emerges that the Chief Rabbi has a broad sphere of influence in Israel and the Diaspora, in the spiritual and ethical realm as well as the administrative realm, in a broad range of weighty areas.

### 2. Shevet miYehudah II Orach Chaim 18

In my humble opinion, the best counsel would be to do this: Before one reads the maftir, let ten men leave with the second bar mitzvah, to another room. After the first finishes reading from the Torah and Prophets, these men return with the second, and he also reads, with all of the blessings...

In general, it is worth emphasizing that they must satisfy the minds of the young who enter the yoke of mitzvot, and their relatives, so that through this they will draw close to Torah and mitzvot. The reading of a youth before a great gathering is impressive, imprinting in his soul sacred feelings which also have a positive influence on all who attend in his honour, even though they do not attend synagogue normally. Clearly, his reading, coming after long preparation, is a spiritual experience which should not be taken lightly, so long as it does not, G-d forbid, conflict with established law and custom. And therefore the gabbaim must be especially careful to prevent empty talk during the Torah reading; this would ruin the effect, the atmosphere of sanctity would disappear, and many problems would likely develop...

### 3. Shevet miYehudah II Orach Chaim 58

The Rabbis explicitly permitted music on that day, because of the great salvation Gd wrought for Israel, the rising of an independent State of Israel, without the yoke of foreigners and enslavement to another nation, and the gates of Israel have been opened wide before the masses of the House of Israel in all of its Diaspora lands. Through this more than 600,000 souls have ascended from the exiles; according to our beliefs, this is the start of redemption. And if the spiritual state of the nation does not satisfy us at all, and we should fight it continually to strengthen religion and observance of the sacred Torah and her mitzvot, still, in the beginning of the days of Ezra haSofer it was also thus. We believe powerfully that the situation will improve, and the nation of Israel will return to the way of faithful Judaism.

## Clergy and Politician

### 4. Shevet miYehudah II Even haEzer 11

I am inclined to be lenient and have them arrange chuppah and kiddushin for her, when two expert judges will join me. In our day, the power of leniency is needed for such cases, lest they be distanced further and further from Judaism, Gd forbid. So it appears, in my humble opinion.

### 5. Shevet miYehudah II Yoreh Deah 4

It is clear that Mr. Yaakovson's intent is desirable, and he is truly pained by seeing children playing with a non-kosher creature, but he has exceeded proper bounds [in contending] that this will weaken their revulsion at impurity, saying that it could, Gd forbid, lead them to eat rabbit meat. It appears that he was concerned because that was an era of raising rabbits in non-observant kibbutzim... But the cases are not at all similar... In such matters we must be careful not to exceed, for all who add subtract. This suffices for those who understand.

#### 6. Shevet miYehudah II Yoreh Deah 64

From his honour's words I see that he has addressed this with expert rabbis, and they have agreed to permit. Therefore, I inform you that after examining the matter, I also agree to permit research with this material to heal the ill. I have several important notes, but the time is insufficient and I will raise them extremely briefly...

#### 7. Rabbi Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg (20<sup>th</sup> century Germany, Switzerland), Seridei Eish 1:162:summary

Since most early authorities dispute the Rambam, as cited above, it is possible to be lenient ... *Note:* But now I have seen that in Noam 6, Rabbi Isser Yehudah Unterman, Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel shlit"á, prohibits aborting a fetus for an ill woman even before 40 days, and therefore in practice one must still take counsel with the great authorities...

#### 8. Shevet miYehudah Shaar V

Especially these who come from Russia in mixed families, in my view one should not be strict upon them with hard questions, because this looks to them like an attack on them. The reality is that they truly wish to convert. This is obvious from two aspects.

First: They never absorbed the fundamentals of Christian religion, because they do not learn religion there at all, and certainly among the young, for it is not mentioned in school there. Similarly, their spirits are sick of the prattle of the coarse message of atheism they force-feed the young, to the point of vomiting. When we explain the principles of our sacred religion to them, this is like ink on new paper, which is not quickly erased.

Second: Those who come from there are filled with bitterness regarding the persecution of Jews and the libels against our religion. Their hearts are very bitter against their non-Jewish friends who did not protect them, and who betrayed their friendship. Therefore, when we accept them with respect, they bond with the Jewish nation wholeheartedly, and with the fundamentals of our sacred religion, like observance of the holy Shabbat, kosher food, etc....

And because I have mentioned Russian Jewry, I feel obligated to mention that Gd-forbid, we must never abandon hope for those Jews regarding Jewish observance. There is basis for believing that when we will live to merit to bring them here, we will be able, with Gd's help, to influence them, to draw them ever closer to total, powerful faith in Gd and in His eternal Torah...

#### 9. Declaration of "Yom haKaddish HaKelali"

Now we have established an on-going day of memorial for this destruction, the tenth of Tevet, a day of communal fasting across generations. The fast on which the first destruction began is suited for a day of memorial for the last destruction as well, at the end of the final exile. On this day, it is incumbent upon us to elevate ourselves above the matters of the moment, and to be united with the memory of our martyrs, who remained loyal to the Eternal One of Israel, and who were dedicated to the vision of redemption to the end. Their song of *Ani Maamin* will remain forever a holy and revered hymn, and the memory of these heroes will remain inscribed on the hearts of all of the Children of Israel, and shall never be erased.

#### 10. Shevet miYehudah II Yoreh Deah 5

...And if, as we hope, he will find that there is room to rely on these authorities, he will agree to publicize this for the sake of the House of Israel, who are careful regarding prohibitions, and also so that there will not be a division of sects, these prohibiting and these permitting...

#### 11. Shevet miYehudah II Yoreh Deah 16

You, from the winery, have informed me that according to the ruling of the great rabbis of the USA, these wines may be poured by Shabbat violators, and even non-Jews, since they have been properly pasteurized. The Israeli Chief Rabbinate agrees that they should act as established by the great rabbis who are involved in this ruling, and one should not doubt them. However, there are places where they do not permit, like Switzerland, much of England and part of Belgium, so place this [permissive] note only in the merchandise sent to the USA.

## 12. Shevet miYehudah II Orach Chaim 10

All of this is correct, and may I be rewarded for ruling thus in Liverpool. When young people came from a synagogue in one of the neighbourhoods, claiming that since their children were taught by an Israeli teacher, who accustomed them to read, pray and learn with a Sephardi pronunciation, they wished to have the Torah reading with this pronunciation, so that the children would understand what they read. I strongly opposed this, for one may not impose a new order on people, against tradition, even if those who seek it are the majority...

However, there is no proof from this for our case, for the makeup of our community has changed entirely since those words were written (1935). In the interim, hundreds of thousands of brothers have joined, and they have only heard Sephardi pronunciation. Similarly, two generations have been raised, educated only in Sephardi pronunciation... This community is mixed into every synagogue, and how could one deny them the right to read in the pronunciation with which they have been raised and educated?... Therefore, one should not prevent children from reading from the Torah with the Sephardi pronunciation, anywhere. But if they seek to establish a rule to read only with Sephardi pronunciation at all times, one should not heed them, for the power of tradition established across generations is great. Even if only a minority desires not to change, we listen to them.

## A Major Legacy: Medical Halachah

### 13. Shevet miYehudah I pg. 55

There is tangible danger for a blind person as well [as one who experiences seizures], and therefore healing his blindness is called "life-saving", because it is not possible for a blind person to remain at home at all times, and when he travels in the street, many dangers lie in wait for him.. Also, when he leaves and enters his home or the home of his friend, he needs, generally, to ascend and descend steps, and danger is unavoidable. Therefore, one should treat this as life-saving, as with someone who experiences seizures.

### 14. Shevet miYehudah I pg. 314

The basis for permission is that the flesh of the dead is prohibited only as long as he is dead. When it is brought to life, the prohibition is automatically eliminated. And just as we were not forbidden to benefit from the people who are revived from the dead in Tanach – like the son of the *Tzarfatit* and the son of the *Shunamit* and the dry bones revived in the time of Ezekiel – so, too, when part of a corpse returns to life via grafting into a live body, benefit is not prohibited. The reason is that the cause for the prohibition against benefit from dead flesh is not the prior departure of the soul, but rather the fact that it is currently dead...