The Joint Bet Din of the Conservative Movement

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There is hardly a part of our Movement that has not been impacted and enhanced by the knowledge, expertise, dedication, and service that Rabbi Joel Roth has devoted to the programs and projects of Jewish life and learning in the Conservative Movement world-wide. Since our days as students together in Rabbinical School, over 55 years ago, I have learned from him, been inspired by his example, and have been honored to call him my good friend. One of the many projects on which we have worked together is the Joint Bet Din of the Conservative Movement, on which we have served together since its establishment in 1989. We have attempted to apply an understanding of rabbinic literature and the ongoing development of halakhah to issues related to the problems of iggun in the Jewish Community. Rabbi Roth's presence and participation have enhanced the work and reputation of the Joint Bet Din, and have made a significant difference in the lives of the individuals who have turned to us, and the integrity of the Jewish Community in general.

Background

Among the most difficult Jewish legal issues with which rabbinic leaders have dealt is the issue of the *agunah*, a [civilly] divorced woman whose husband has not given her a *get*. Traditionally, where no *get* was given to the woman, the couple was still considered married and she was prohibited from remarrying. According to *halakhah*, not only could she not remarry, but any children who might result from a later union would be *mamzerim*.

This problem was so serious both for the woman involved and for the Jewish community in general, that in many cases even the strictest of rabbis are known to have relied on leniencies within *halakhah* to find a solution. For centuries, in places where local Jewish communities had a measure of autonomy and self-regulation, the rabbis were often in a position to force the husband to give a *get*. But as Jewish communities lost their autonomy and were governed by the laws and requirements of the countries in which they resided, they lost their civil powers to enforce the laws of marriage and divorce. One of the results of this change was that the rabbis had less power, or (even) no power at all,

to force a recalcitrant husband to give a *get*, even after the civil court had declared the couple divorced.

In the United States, over the years, various communities grappled with these issues of personal status in a variety of ways. Within the Conservative Movement, rabbis and *mesadrei gittin* worked to implement halakhically justifiable ways to alleviate the plight of the *agunah* and to minimize the damaging effects of *mamzerut*. In the middle of the 20th Century, a course was given at The Jewish Theological Seminary to train *mesadrei gittin*; and in 1969 the Rabbinical Assembly through its Committee on Jewish Law and Standards (CJLS) authorized *hafka'at kiddushin* by a *bet din* (annulment of a marriage by a rabbinic court) in carefully-reviewed cases, where it was clear that the husband would never agree to give a *get*.

These developments, while necessary and welcome, still meant that independent *mesadrei gittin* handled individual cases on their own. There was no standardized and centralized mechanism for setting standards for *mesadrei gittin* or for training and certifying new *mesadrei gittin*; nor was there a central database of information and documentation concerning all *gittin* that were granted within our Movement.

There was also little recourse for dealing with individuals who remembered getting or giving a *get*, but were unable to identify anyone reliable who could verify their information. There were many cases where the *Mesader Gittin*, or the rabbi with whom the couple worked, was either unknown to them or was no longer available.

In 1988, the Rabbinical Assembly, together with the Jewish Theological Seminary and the United Synagogue of America (now the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism), decided to establish the Joint Bet Din of the Conservative Movement, to centralize the training and certification of *mesadrei gittin*, to establish a comprehensive database of previously married individuals and their status according to Jewish Law, and to familiarize rabbis and congregants with the importance of and the availability of halakhically-acceptable solutions related to the dissolution of marriages.

I was asked to chair the Joint Bet Din, and on February 9, 1989, the first meeting of the Joint Bet Din took place. The Joint Bet Din consisted of nine rabbis who were appointed by the Rabbinical Assembly, the Jewish Theological Seminary, and the United Synagogue of America. At its formation, the members were: Rabbis Ben Zion Bergman a"h, Morton Leifman a"h, Yehezkel Musleah a"h, Lionel Moses, Mayer Rabinowitz, Joel Roth, Steven Saltzman a"h, Morris Shapiro a"h, and Israel Silverman a"h.

To help achieve the goal of standardization and centralization, the Joint Bet Din asked all members of the Rabbinical Assembly who had been writing *git-*

tin to submit the necessary documentation in order to be certified by the Joint Bet Din. In 1990, The Rabbinical Assembly asked all of its members to use only *mesadrei gittin* who had been certified by the Joint Bet Din, and to make use of the *Get* Registry Database of the Joint Bet Din for the protection of men and women who are issued *gittin* through our Movement as well as for the protection of their future children. It further asked all regional *batei din* of the Rabbinical Assembly and *mesadrei gittin* certified by the Joint Bet Din to submit all cases of a recalcitrant husband who refused to give a *get* to the Joint Bet Din.

Since that time, the Joint Bet Din has trained and certified many *mesadrei gittin* who serve communities all over the United States as well as Canada, Central and South America, Europe, and Israel. On the Rabbinical Assembly website, the Joint Bet Din makes a list of *mesadrei gittin* available to the public, so that interested parties can contact them directly. The Joint Bet Din has established an extensive database that enables rabbis to check information about previously married individuals to ascertain whether they are eligible to remarry according to the halakhic requirements of the Conservative Movement. Those requirements state that no Rabbinical Assembly member shall perform a wedding of a woman who has not received a *get*, nor of a man who has not given a *get*.

In carrying out its mission and its agenda, the Joint Bet Din has sought to minimize the number of *agunot* in the community. It has worked diligently to allow a maximum number of Jewish men and women whose marriages have been dissolved to “move on with their lives” within the framework of Jewish Law. Current members of the Joint Bet Din are: Rabbis Stanley Asekoff, Pamela Barmash, Elliot Dorff, Karen Reiss Medwed, Lionel Moses, Chaim Weiner, Avraham Reisner, Scott Rosenberg, and Joel Roth.

The Joint Bet Din utilizes various methods and mechanisms to achieve its goals.

Measures Taken to Minimize the Problem of *Iggun*

Our *halakhic* solutions to the problem of *iggun* can be divided into two categories: **preventative measures** and **curative measures**. Preventative measures can be taken before a wedding to ensure that if the marriage were to end with a civil divorce, the wife would not become an *agunah*. Curative measures are used when preventative measures have not been taken and there is a civil divorce, but a *get* has not been granted. In this situation, the divorced woman is still an *agunah*, unable to remarry or consider herself free according to Jewish Law.

Preventative Measures

The Lieberman Clause

In 1953, the Rabbinical Assembly and the Jewish Theological Seminary accepted an additional clause in the *ketubah* proposed by Professor Saul Lieberman a"h. The purpose of the Lieberman *takanah* was to help solve the problem of *agunot*. By including this clause, the bride and groom were agreeing to recognize the authority of the *Bet Din* of the Rabbinical Assembly and the Jewish Theological Seminary to summon either the husband or the wife at the request of the other in order to dissolve the marriage, thus enabling both husband and wife to go on with their respective lives, and to remarry in accordance with Jewish Law. The clause reads as follows:

וּצְבִיאוֹ מֵר _____ בֵּר _____ חֲתָן דָּנָן וּמֵרֶת _____ בֵּת _____ דָּא דָּאן
יִסִּיק אֲדַעְתָּא חֲחַד מִיָּנְהוֹן לְנִתּוּקֵי נִשְׁוֹאִיהוֹן אוּ אֵן אִיתְנָתוּק נִשְׁוֹאִיהוֹן בְּעֶרְכָּאוֹת
דְּמִדִּינָתָא דִּיכּוֹל דִּין אוּ דָּא לִימְנָא לַחֲבֵרִיָּה לְבֵי דִינָא דְכְּנִישְׁתָּא דְרַבְנָן וּדְבֵית מִדְּרָשָׁא
דְּרַבְנָן דְּאַרְעֵתָא דְקִיָּמָא אוּ מֵאֵן דָּתֵי מִן חִילָה וּלְיִצּוֹתוֹ תְּרוּיָהּוּ לְפִסְקָא דְדִינָהּ בְּדִל
דִּיכְלוֹ תְּרוּיָהּוּ לְמִיָּחִי בְּדִינֵי דְאוּרִיָּתָא

_____, the groom, and _____, the bride, further agreed that should either contemplate dissolution of the marriage, or following the dissolution of their marriage in the civil courts, each may summon the other to the Bet Din of the Rabbinical Assembly and the Jewish Theological Seminary, or its representative, and that each will abide by its instructions so that throughout life each will be able to live according to the laws of the Torah.

Including this clause means that the couple has agreed that if a *get* had not been given following the civil divorce, the couple would appear before the Bet Din of the Jewish Theological Seminary and the Rabbinical Assembly, and they would obey the dictates of the Bet Din. If the Bet Din decides that the husband must give a *get*, and the wife must accept the *get*, then both must abide by the ruling of the Bet Din, thereby enabling both parties to remarry according to *halakhah*, and hopefully live a full Jewish life thereafter.

This was an innovative attempt to try to limit cases of *agunot*. This novel approach found favor with many rabbis and halakhic authorities, both inside of the Conservative Movement as well as outside of it. In fact, when Professor Lieberman suggested adding this clause to the *ketubah*, the respective heads of The Rabbinical Council of America (Orthodox) and the Rabbinical Assembly (Conservative) met to discuss the inclusion of the clause. Among those participating in these discussions were Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik and Professor

Saul Lieberman. At the time, all agreed that from a *halakhic* point of view, the clause could be added to the *ketubah*, and could be used in the marriage ceremony. However, for whatever reasons, the Lieberman clause appears today only in what are referred to as “Conservative *ketubot*.”

The Lieberman Clause was, for many years, the only standardized preventative measure, and still appears in many versions of “Conservative *Ketubot*.” But there are a number of problems with the use of this clause if the husband refuses to appear before the Joint Bet Din or follow its decision.

In order to force the recalcitrant partner to appear and follow the directives of the Joint Bet Din, one must get an American court to enforce the clause. Our experience has been that in the United States, the highest courts in many states will not involve themselves in the *ketubah* at all, because they feel that doing so would violate the principle of separation of church and state. This leaves the civilly-divorced wife with no legal recourse.

Even when a civil court is willing to hear the case, there are no guarantees that the recalcitrant husband will live up to the decision of the court and give a *get*. As with cases where husbands have been ordered to pay alimony or child support, and have found ways to avoid it (disappearing, serving time in prison, etc.) so too, recalcitrant husbands can avoid giving a *get*, leaving the civilly-divorced wife an *agunah*.

Letter of Intent

In 1991, based on these problems, the Joint Bet Din created a “letter of intent” to be used together with a *ketubah* that includes The Lieberman Clause. This Letter was to be signed by the husband and wife, and is, indeed, a *separate* document. It is carefully worded in order to ensure its viability in American courts. It reads as follows:

Each of us has met with Rabbi _____, who has provided us with a copy of the *ketubah* (a copy of which is attached) and explained to each of us the provisions contained in the *ketubah* concerning the dissolution of marriage.

Each of us acknowledges and confirms our understanding that this *ketubah* is a legal contract and shall be binding under both Jewish and civil law concerning the formation and dissolution of our marriage.

In particular, each of us acknowledges that according to this *ketubah*, should our marriage be dissolved in the civil courts, each of us is bound to appear before the Joint Bet Din of the Conservative Movement, or such Bet Din as shall be designated by the Joint Bet Din, if so requested by the other, and to abide by its instruction and decision with respect to the

dissolution of our marriage under Jewish law. Each of us intends that the undertaking to appear before and to be bound by the directions of the Bet Din may be enforced by the civil court of law. Each of us acknowledges our agreement to the *ketubah* and our willingness to be bound by its terms.

Dated _____

Signature of Bride _____

Signature of Groom _____

Explained and signed under the supervision of Rabbi _____

Signature of Rabbi _____

By signing this letter of intent, the husband and wife agree to uphold the terms of the Lieberman Clause, and accept the fact that this letter of intent is a civilly-binding document that can be upheld by a civil court.

However, a general objection to the use of the Lieberman clause even with the letter of intent is that, in cases of recalcitrant husbands, we must resort to using civil courts to enforce *halakhah*! If, in fact, our halakhic system is a full-fledged legal system with integrity of its own, we should not need to rely on the civil courts to solve our halakhic problems.

T'nai B'kiddushin—Ante-Nuptial Agreement

In 1969, the Conservative Movement's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards created an "ante-nuptial agreement" in which the couple agrees that if they divorce in civil court and the husband authorizes the issuing of a *get* within six months, then their marriage was valid. But if a *get* is not issued within six months of the civil divorce decree, then their marriage (retroactively) was not a valid marriage from the moment it was performed and celebrated. The text of the ante-nuptial agreement reads as follows:

On the ____ day of _____, ____, corresponding to the ____ day of _____ [in the Jewish calendar], in _____ [City and State], the groom, _____, and the bride, _____, of their own free will and accord, entered into the following agreement with respect to their intended marriage.

The groom made the following declaration to the bride:

"I will betroth you and marry you according to the laws of Moses and the

People Israel, subject to the following conditions: If our marriage should be terminated by decree of the civil courts and if by expiration of

six months after such a decree, I give you a divorce according to the laws of Moses and the People Israel (*a get*), then our betrothal (*kiddushin*) and marriage (*nissuin*) will have remained valid and binding. But if our marriage should be terminated by decree of the civil courts and if by expiration of six months after such a decree I do not give you a divorce according to the laws of Moses and the People Israel (*a get*), then our betrothal (*kiddushin*) and our marriage (*nissuin*) will have been null and void.”

The bride said to the groom: “I consent to the conditions that you have made.”

Signature of the groom: _____

Signature of the bride: _____

We, the undersigned, acting as a Beth Din [court], witnessed the oral statements and signatures of the groom and bride.

_____ (rabbi)

_____ (witness)

_____ (witness)

This is a separate document which is *not* part of the *ketubah*. The *T'nai B'kiddushin*, as the term implies, serves to make the marriage a “conditional marriage” dependent upon the fulfilment of the terms in it.

When using the *T'nai B'kiddushin*, the groom must read the document in the presence of a *bet din* of three, and the bride must reply that she consents to these conditions. The bride and groom must sign the document, and the members of the Bet Din must sign it as well. Under the *huppah*, before the groom betroths the bride, the rabbi must ask them if they agree to be married in accordance with the laws of Moses and Israel and the conditions to which they agreed beforehand. If they each answer “yes,” then the wedding ceremony continues with the betrothal formula.

Eventually, if the couple gets a civil divorce, and the husband refuses to give a *get*, the wife can petition the Joint Bet Din for an annulment of the marriage, based on the fact that the husband did not abide by the *T'nai B'kiddushin*. If, in reviewing the case, the Joint Bet Din verifies that the condition was agreed upon but not fulfilled, the Joint Bet Din annuls the marriage and issues a *p'tor* to the woman, so that she is free to remarry.

Our use of *T'nai B'kiddushin* is based upon solid precedents in halakhic literature and the issue of conditional marriages has been studied by various authorities. Two important books on the subject are: A. Freimann's *Seder Kiddushin ve'Nissuin* (Jerusalem, 1945); and Eliezer Berkowitz's *T'nai be'Nissuin uv'Get* (Mossad Harav Kook, 1966).

Two notable examples of the use of *T'nai B'kiddushin* in the early 1900's are from the French Rabbinate (1907) and the Turkish Rabbinate (1924). With growing numbers of civil divorces in their communities, and the inability of the Jewish rabbinic courts to pressure husbands to give a *get*, the French and Turkish rabbinate introduced a *takanah*, allowing the *T'nai B'kiddushin* (conditional marriage) to be used as an halakhically valid method. This would ensure that women would not remain *agunot* and would not enter into second marriages that would have been prohibited by Jewish Law.

Today, although there is sometimes discomfort about raising the issue of divorce to a couple that is about to be married, we have embarked on a campaign to convince couples and the rabbis officiating at their weddings to use the *T'nai B'kiddushin*. In a society where so many marriages end in divorce, the protection that the *T'nai B'kiddushin* offers the wife and, by extension, the integrity of the Jewish community in matters of personal status, are of utmost importance. To that end, we recommend that rabbis raise the issue in their pre-marital meetings with couples, an appropriate time to talk about the *T'nai B'kiddushin*, and to point out its positive and protective elements.

Curative Measures

In cases where preventative measures were not taken, the following curative solutions have been used by the Joint Bet Din.

Hafka'at Kiddushin (Annulment)

This juridical principle states that all betrothals are done with the approbation and approval of the rabbis, and the rabbis who offered their approval at one time could subsequently rescind their approval. Discussing a particular case, the Talmud states:

כל דמקדש אדעתא דרבנן מקדש ואפקעינהו רבנן לקידושין מיניה (גיטין לג, א)

When a man betroths a woman, he does so under the conditions laid down by the rabbis, and in this case, the rabbis annul his betrothal.

b. Git. 33a

From this instance and from others, we see that the rabbis had the power and prerogative to rescind their approval of a marriage and thereby annul it. The only question confronting us is whether we are restricted in using the principle only for those cases and situations mentioned in the Talmud, or whether we can we extend the use of the principle to other cases where we deem it necessary to do so today? Because of the high rate of divorce, and the implications of

having many *agunot* in the Jewish community, we feel compelled to extend the use of the principle to solve the problems of today, rather than only applying the principle to cases mentioned in the Talmud. The precedent we rely on is the *method* that was used in the past, and not the specifics of earlier cases. We see those cases as *examples* and not as limiting instances. We share the attitude of the rabbis of the Talmud, about whom we read:

משום עיגונא אקילו בה רבנן (גיטין ג, א)

In matters of *iggun*, the rabbis utilized lenient approaches.

b. Git. 3a

Clearly, the rabbis were deeply committed to limiting the number of *agunot* in the community, even if doing so required them to take lenient positions. Since the rabbis are the ones who grant approval of a marriage, *they* have the right to rescind that approval, thereby annulling the marriage. Though the marriage was annulled, the children of the annulled marriage are not tainted according to Jewish law, even though they were born out of wedlock.

Our experience has been that in some cases, when the husband is told that the only alternative to his giving a *get* is for us to annul the marriage, the husband agrees to give a *get* because of his discomfort at the thought of the marriage being annulled.

Our procedure in an annulment is as follows:

A file is presented to the Joint Bet Din by one of our *mesadrei gittin*. It is then reviewed to make sure that it contains documents and testimonies corroborating the woman's claims. The Joint Bet Din then tries to employ a variety of approaches to get the husband to authorize the giving of a *get*. When the members of the Joint Bet Din are convinced that the husband will not give a *get*, the Bet Din votes on whether to annul the marriage.

Among the reasons for which the Joint Bet Din has annulled marriages are:

- Blackmail on the part of the husband, usually to try to overturn the property settlement.
- Disappearance of a husband fleeing from the authorities or from debts, when all efforts to locate him are to no avail.
- Physical abuse by the husband, even after the civil divorce.
- Inability to locate a former husband after many years of divorce, but with no indication that he has died.
- Recalcitrance on the part of the husband, after the civil divorce, for no reason other than spite.

Get Al Yedai Zikkui—A Bet Din Accepts a *Get* on the Wife's Behalf
We read in the Tamud:

זכין לאדם שלא בפניו (קידושין כג, א)

One may obtain a privilege for a person in his absence.

b. Qidd. 23a

There are cases where a husband is prepared to authorize a *get*, but the wife is unable or unwilling to accept the *get* at that time. This situation can arise because the wife is recalcitrant, inaccessible, or mentally incompetent. In each of these cases, the wife herself will not accept the *get*, even though it is to her advantage. In order to properly terminate the marriage according to Jewish law, a bet din can accept the *get* on her behalf. This procedure is based on the principle that one may act for the benefit of an individual, even if that individual is not present.

Once the Joint Bet Din approves of utilizing *Get Al Yedei Zikkui* for a particular case, the *Mesader Gittin* arranges for the *get* to be accepted by a bet din on her behalf, and a record of the procedure is entered into the database of the Joint Bet Din. The husband is issued a *p'tor*, which enables him to remarry. If the woman ever wants to remarry, she can request a *p'tor* from the *Mesader Gittin* who had accepted the *get* on her behalf.

Heter Meah Rabbanim (Permission by 100 Rabbis)

Rabbeinu Gershom of Mainz had issued a decree around 1000 CE, banning polygamy. But in certain limited cases, the ban permits the man to take a second wife, after receiving the permission of 100 rabbis from three different countries or jurisdictions.

In the past, the use of *heter meah rabbanim* was limited because of the difficulties of communication between and among different Jewish communities. Today, the procedure is much easier because of the ease of communicating with Jewish communities around the world. However, even though communicating with 100 rabbis representing three countries or jurisdictions is so easy today, the Joint Bet Din has used this procedure only once. The case involved a man whose wife was in an irreversible coma and a civil divorce had been granted. But the husband did not want to give her a *get* lest that be understood to signify that he would no longer continue to care for her and provide for her needs after he remarried. A form was sent to over 100 rabbis in different states within the United States, as well as in Europe and Israel. Over 100 positive responses were collected, and on the basis of those responses,

the Joint Bet Din instructed the *Mesader Gittin* to issue a *p'tor* to the husband, enabling him to remarry.

Examples of Cases That Have Come to the Bet Din

Case I

Shortly after Mrs. G. was married, her husband insisted that he did not want her socializing with her friends and prohibited her from seeing them. He also prohibited her from pursuing a career and insisted that he wanted to have children immediately. None of these demands had been suggested before the wedding, and the woman was totally shocked by these developments. When physical abuse began, she realized that she had to sever the relationship. The man and woman were separated for several years and she finally sued for a civil divorce, which was granted. Her ex-husband now lives with a non-Jewish woman and has a son. When the *Mesader Gittin* for Mrs. G contacted the ex-husband to try to have him authorize a *get*, the ex-husband refused, and threatened the *Mesader Gittin* if he tried to contact him again. We annulled the marriage, and she received a *p'tor* from the *Mesader Gittin*, which would allow her to remarry in the future.

Case II

A woman from a very Orthodox community in Monsey, New York turned to us to help her free herself from her recalcitrant husband. Even though she had turned to multiple *batei din* in her community, all of whom ordered her husband to give her a *get*, the husband refused to abide by their decisions and did not give her a *get*. We explained to her that our Joint Bet Din was part of the Conservative Movement and that our annulment would not be recognized in her community. She responded by telling us that she was aware of who we were, and that she understood that if she remained in her community, she would not be able to remarry. Nevertheless, she wanted closure to this chapter of her life, and needed an affirmation that she was a free woman, according to *halakhah*! We annulled the marriage.

Case III

Mrs. T turned to us when her husband refused to consider giving her a *get*, though the civil divorce had been decreed long ago. We sent him a "registered, return receipt requested" letter explaining that giving her a *get* would allow her to move on with her life, and that without his giving her a *get*, neither he nor she could be married by a Conservative rabbi. The letter was returned to us marked "refused delivery." He had obviously seen the return address and wanted no contact with us. We tried to contact him a few months later and he did respond

to our letter, saying that he did not want to give a *get* because he wanted to reconcile with Mrs. T. However, a few weeks later we received proof that he was about to marry another woman. When we contacted him about this, he did not deny that he was getting married to another woman, but still refused to give her a *get*. It became clear that his refusal to give his first wife a *get* was based on spite, and he had no intention of ever authorizing the preparation of a *get*. We annulled the marriage.

Case IV

An Iranian woman who had been married in her teens and had suffered years of mental and physical abuse, turned to us to help her pressure her husband to give her a *get*. The civil divorce had been decreed, but all the terms of custody and finances had not yet been settled. We were able to reach the husband only by cell phone, and he indicated that he was in the midst of a civil suit concerning financial matters and child custody issues. He claimed that once those were resolved to his satisfaction, he would grant her a *get*. At his court case, when he claimed that he had no income and no permanent domicile, the judge asked him how he expected to gain custody of the children and support them. It became clear to the court and to us that he had intended to take the children and disappear. He lost the civil suit and refused to give a *get*. We annulled the marriage.

Case v

A woman came to the Joint Bet Din seeking some solution, after having been divorced for some time but unable to convince her ex-husband to give her a *get*. When we contacted the husband, he claimed that he was still trying to reconcile with his ex-wife, and that was the reason he hadn't wanted to give her a *get*. It came to our attention that the husband was already scheduled to marry a Catholic woman soon, and was planning to convert to Catholicism. We contacted the Archbishop responsible for the parish where the marriage was to take place, explained the situation the woman was facing, and asked him to refuse to allow the marriage to take place in the church, until the gentleman gave his first wife a *get*. The prelate agreed, and within a few hours the husband authorized the preparation of a *get*. There was no need to annul the first marriage.

Closing

The Conservative Movement, and specifically the Joint Bet Din, are committed to helping minimize the number of *agunot* in the Jewish community, and to enabling women and men who have been divorced civilly to dissolve their marriage according to *halakhah*. We see our work as essential in helping divorced individuals live within the framework of Jewish law, in protecting any children who may result from subsequent marriages, and in helping maintain the integrity of the Jewish community in matters of personal status.

As our predecessors found solutions to the halakhic problems of their times, we try to follow in their footsteps and continue to work to find halakhic solutions to the problems in our own day. עוד נמשכת השלשלת (the unbroken chain continues). May we be granted the *zkhut* to serve as links in this precious chain.