

Chalitzah in Philadelphia

Adar 22 5777



Our Shiur (at FTI) was Zoche to be able to look in on a Chalitzah service this past Monday in Philadelphia. Our Rebbi who is teaching us Masechtas Yevamos had asked the Beis Din to allow us to attend any such cases if they came up. The morning of the chalitzah Rabbi Harris was told he should come along with any other shiurim that wanted to come. Along with my shiur Rabbi Shmidman (9th), Rabbi Baum (10th), and Rabbi Juni (12th) brought their Shiurim. This was the first Chalitzah done in Philadelphia in four years and it was done in Rabbi Torrebello's shul, Ahavas Torah on the women's side of the Mechitzah.

The Bais Din was headed by Rabbi Brisman, flanked by Rabbi Terebelo, and Rabbi Goldstein with Rabbi Lazerowski, and our own Rabbi Harris on the side as *Nosrim* (Extras). In attendance were the middle aged Yavum and Yevama (Ploni and Plonis), several family members and multiple shiurim from Greater Philadelphia. All of the non-invested parties were separated from the Chalitzah by a barrier of tables and chairs, while the woman stood to the left and the man on the right of the Bais Din, all as dictated by Halacha.

Rabbi Brisman started the process by asking the Yavum: "What is your request?" Reading from the handout, he answered "Can I do Chalitzah to my Sister in Law?" The Bais Din then clarified that for all Yes or No questions, each person should answer once to not create any confusion. The Rabbi then asked Plonis, who had flown in from California for this event, if she had eaten or drank anything that day. She answered that she had not, a widely accepted Minhag. Then the Bais Din asked both, "Do you want to do Yibum?" They both replied they did not. They were both asked, "Do you want to do Chalitzah?" They both answered that they did want to and Beis Din clarified that from that point on either would be free to marry whomever they want.

At that point the Bais Din told Ploni that they wanted to make sure that this would be a sincere Chalitzah. They asked the following three questions:

1. Are you being forced to do Chalitzah? No.

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2. Did you make a promise to do chalitzah? No. Bais Din proceeded to release him from any accidental Neder he had placed on himself to not do Chalitzah.
3. Have you ever said anything that would make the Chalitzah invalid? No, not even by accident. Bais Din declared that if any Eidim came to try to testify that he had, they would be considered false witnesses.

Bais Din then had the Yovum walk back and forth to determine which foot was his dominant foot; it was his right. Then they asked the Yevama if she was a righty or a lefty, she said she was a lefty. The Bais Din then helped the man tie the Chalitzah shoe around his foot. The Chalitzah shoe was a brown leather loafer with straps that were knotted 3 times around the ankle. The man was then told to say the words "Lo Chafzti Lakachtu", "I do not want to take her", in one breath! Following that, using only her left hand, she untied the straps, then switched hands and without the man lifting his foot, took off the shoe. She was then told to throw the shoe across the room, following the Ramah. She remarked humorously "Watch out - I have a good arm" as she signaled people to get out of the way. After she threw the "shoe", she was told to spit in front of him, than she said aloud, "Kacha Yeaseh Laish Asher Lo Yivneh Es Bais Achuv" - So is done to the man who does not want to build the house of his brother. Everyone was then told to say "Chalutzah HaNa-al" three times. Then Bais din made the Bracha of Baruch Asher Kidishuno Bmitzsvosuv Levukacham Shel Avraham Avinu, and the Chalitzah process was finished, though afterwards a Shtar was written proving that they had done a proper Chalitzah. The shoe was returned to Beis Din to be used in case there are more unfortunate cases where Chalitzah is required.

This was a very educational experience for our class as we got to see one of the most obscure and intricate parts of Mesechtas Yibum. In our High depth Shiurim all the classes focus on the more argumentative parts of the Mesechta. And for the faster paced classes (Bekius), the Gemara (Perek 12) that discusses the Chalitzah process is at the end, something we have not gotten too yet. So all we knew beforehand was just bits and pieces. It was nice to see the actual process in its true form to be more informed of the background of our Masechta, and so that moving on we can look and learn with improved perspective of our Gemara. May we only know of Simchas.