

Recent Statements by Agudath Israel and The Rabbinical Council of America Re- garding Women Rabbis

To place the following two articles, regarding the ordination of women as rabbis, in perspective we present, in chronological order, the following statements issued by Agudath Israel and The Rabbinical Council of America. Ed.

Statement of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah of America (10 Adar 5770) [February 25, 2010]¹

Rabbi Avi Weiss has conferred “semikha” upon a woman, has made her an Assistant Rabbi at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale where she carries out certain traditional rabbinical functions, and has now given her the title of “Rabbah” (formerly “Maharat”). He has stated that the change in title is designed to “make it clear that Sara Hurwitz is a full member of our rabbinic staff, a rabbi with the additional quality of a distinct woman’s voice.”

These developments represent a radical and dangerous departure from Jewish tradition and the mesoras haTorah, and must be condemned in the strongest terms. Any congregation with a woman in a rabbinical position of any sort cannot be considered Orthodox.

Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah of America

Rabbi Simcha Bunim Ehrenfeld	Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetsky
Rabbi Yitzchok Feigelstock	Rabbi Aryeh Malkiel Kotler
Rabbi Dovid Feinstein	Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Levin
Rabbi Aharon Feldman	Rabbi Yaakov Perlow
Rabbi Yosef Harari-Raful	Rabbi Aaron Schechter

¹ See <<http://torahmusings.com/2010/02/moetzes-condemns-ordination-of-women/>>.

March 9, 2010, 23 Adar, 5770: Upon consultation with its rabbinic leadership, Agudath Israel of America issued the following statement today:²

The leadership of the Rabbinical Council of America and Rabbi Avi Weiss have apparently reached agreement that Rabbi Weiss would no longer confer the title of “Rabba” upon graduates of his women’s seminary, but rather the title “Maharat.”

This superficial move does not in any way change the position of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah that placing women in traditional rabbinic positions departs from the Jewish mesorah, and that any congregation with a woman in such a position cannot call itself Orthodox.

That the leadership of a respected rabbinical organization seems to have capitulated to Rabbi Weiss’ enterprise is deeply dismaying. We trust that this capitulation does not represent the perspective of the principled majority of the organization’s member rabbis.

Upon consultation with its rabbinic leadership, Agudath Israel of America issued the following statement today: [March 11, 2010]³

Hamodia reports that Rabbi Shmuel Goldin, First Vice-President of the Rabbinical Council of America, has clarified that the RCA “in no way endorses the title ‘maharat’ or the ‘maharat’ program under the direction of Rabbi Avi Weiss.”

Rabbi Goldin further quotes RCA President Rabbi Moshe Kletenik as having stated that ordination of women “is a breach of our *Mesorah* and is unacceptable practice in Orthodoxy,” and that “it is also unacceptable for an Orthodox synagogue to have a woman on its rabbinical staff.”

Agudath Israel warmly welcomes the clarification and commends the RCA leaders for their forthright and principled words.

² See <<https://www.5tjt.com/international-news/6388-a-statement-from-a-gutath-yisrael-of-america>>.

³ See <<http://www.cross-currents.com/archives/2010/03/11/agudath-israel-commends-rca-leaders/#ixzz1AxuoRUKb>>.

May we all continue to stand guard to protect the integrity of our *Mesorah*.

Resolution on Women's Communal Roles in Orthodox Jewish Life Adopted Without Dissent by the 51st Convention of The Rabbinical Council of America. [April 27, 2010] ⁴

1) The flowering of Torah study and teaching by God-fearing Orthodox women in recent decades stands as a significant achievement. The Rabbinical Council of America is gratified that our *chaverim* have played a prominent role in facilitating these accomplishments.

2) We members of the Rabbinical Council of America see as our sacred and joyful duty the practice and transmission of Judaism in all of its extraordinary, multifaceted depth and richness – *halakhah*, *hashkafah*, tradition and historical memory.

3) In light of the opportunity created by advanced women's learning, the Rabbinical Council of America encourages a diversity of halakhically and communally appropriate professional opportunities for learned, committed women, in the service of our collective mission to preserve and transmit our heritage. Due to our aforesaid commitment to sacred continuity, however, we cannot accept either the ordination of women or the recognition of women as members of the Orthodox rabbinate, regardless of the title.

4) Young Orthodox women are now being reared, educated, and inspired by mothers, teachers and mentors who are themselves beneficiaries of advanced women's Torah education. As members of the new generation rise to positions of influence and stature, we pray that they will contribute to an ever-broadening and ever-deepening wellspring of *talmud Torah*, *yir'at Shamayim*, and *dikduk be-mitzvot*. ❧

⁴ See <<http://www.rabbis.org/news/article.cfm?id=105551>>.