

Get under the Supervision of Badatz: Divorce Matters in Israeli Unofficial Rabbinical Courts

Amihai Radzyner

In Israel, there are many "private" rabbinical courts (i.e., courts operating outside the official system of rabbinic jurisdiction), but most of them focus exclusively on civil law. This article is the first attempt to describe the activities of the private ultra-Orthodox rabbinical courts in the field of divorce. In particular, it deals with the two main private courts in this field: the 'Badatz Eda Charedit' in Jerusalem and the court of Rabbi Karelitz in Bnei Brak.

This activity naturally raises serious legal questions. The article deals with the history of these courts and with the way in which Israeli law and the official rabbinical courts treat them. It tries to explain why Israeli citizens (ultra-Orthodox and others) turn to these unofficial institutions, and how their judges self-justify dealing with divorce cases outside the official system. It also examines the way they deal with *Gittin* (the Jewish divorce writs) and other issues related to divorce cases (for example, the division of marital property).

The article also discusses the complex relationship between these courts and the official rabbinical courts. In some cases, there is cooperation between them, but in others, sharp tension. The most problematic situations are cases in which "private" judges claim that there is a halakhic problem regarding a *get* that was arranged in the official system.