
Rabbi Starts 6 Months in Jail for Sex Abuse

By Michael Rotem

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TEL AVIV - The former chairman of the local rabbinical court convicted of sexually abusing women is to start his prison term today.

A court here rejected Rabbi Haim Pardes's offer to do community service work, instead of going to prison, as a part of a plea bargain.

Pardes was sentenced on December 6 by a district court here to imprisonment and fined after being convicted of committing obscene sexual acts, fraud and breach of trust.

The sentence was handed down after a plea bargain was accepted. In return for his confessing to having committed the obscene sexual acts, Pardes was sentenced to six months' imprisonment, an 18-month suspended sentence and a fine of NIS 25,000.

In its original verdict, the court decided that the rabbi would do community service.

The offer made by the special commissioner of community service to the court was that Pardes would work arranging and translating holy texts in a library for the blind. The judges, however, objected, saying that this work "was suitable for a high school student on vacation."

In one of the cases on which Pardes was convicted, he met with a mother of two daughters in his chamber to discuss her alimony claim. During one of their meetings, he sexually molested her.

A source in the Prison's Authority said yesterday there was no decision on where the rabbi would serve his term.