

Dayan Abraham's departure has been a 'shameful episode', says Chief Rabbi

Ephraim Mirvis has written to community rabbis saying the resignation has 'shaken us to the core'



The Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis has referred to the sudden departure of Dayan Yonason Abraham from the London Beth Din last week as a “shameful episode” and a “painful ordeal”.

The dayan left the Beth Din and his synagogue Toras Chaim in Hendon last week. The JC understands that this was after the religious authorities became aware of what they considered an inappropriate association with a married woman.

Without referring to the reason for his exit, the Chief Rabbi wrote to rabbis today to say: “To have discovered that one of our dayanim had, in his own words, ‘fallen short of the standards expected’ of him, has shaken us to the core.

“When one of us fails in this manner, we are all greatly diminished. A Beth Din must be unimpeachable in its embodiment of Torah values - anything less is entirely unacceptable.”

He said it was for that reason that he, the Beth Din head Dayan Menachem Gelley and the United Synagogue had dealt with the matter “so swiftly” last week.

Rabbis were told of Dayan Abraham's departure last week in a short memo on Wednesday which gave no further explanation.

"This shameful episode has been met by many with disbelief and has caused great pain," the Chief Rabbi wrote. "In addition, there are innocent family members who have been directly affected and whose lives have been devastated by it. As a community, we have a responsibility to look after them, to respect their privacy and to offer appropriate support."

He said he had "great faith in the capacity of our wonderful community to come through this painful ordeal, strengthened by one another and ever more aware of our privilege to lead a life of Torah and kedushah (holiness)."

Rabbi Mirvis has arranged a meeting for rebbetzins on Sunday and for rabbis on Monday to offer divrei chizuk (words of strength).

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