*<Translator note: blue denotes additions or modifications of the source text for clarity or style; purple in chevrons* *denotes my comments and questions; yellow denotes two alternatives. Green denotes names of people or places which you may want to spell differently. Please feel free to be in touch with any questions or comments and/or to send me back the text if you would like me to make any corrections -Avi K.>*

**Chapter Six: The Rabbi and His Community**

**Two Leaders, One Crown**

Despite the long, arduous path to the rabbinic throne, and despite the oppressive workload the rabbinic vocation entailed, some rabbis did manage to develop cordial and even close relationships with the members of their communities. Many rabbis were filled with a hope, sometimes even a conviction, that the position would afford them the opportunity to actually influence community life – especially spiritual and religious life. However, it would soon become clear that realizing these lofty aspirations would be far from simple: the situation, it turned out, was far more complex than anticipated. The most common problem and the most formidable challenge faced by community rabbis was dissent over the nature of their public status. For younger rabbis, having emerged from that talmudic ivory tower which was the yeshiva, this was their first encounter with the real world. And, as they would learn, it was a world that demanded a significant amount of patience, tolerance, and flexibility.

One particularly thorny issue was the rabbi’s relationship with various community figures who did not accept his appointment. In many cases, bickering factions in the community failed to reach an agreement as to the best rabbinic candidate. In other cases, while one candidate was officially chosen, supporters of the rejected candidate refused to accept the decision. When such disagreements erupted, a few scenarios could unfold. One option, as mentioned above, was to postpone (for a specific amount of time or indefinitely) the appointment of a community rabbi. The second option, was to lead a protracted rebellion against the outcome of the selection process. This could be accomplished by simply refusing to accept the rabbi’s authority or by resorting to threats, violence, blackmail, or appealing to powerful figures in the community – all with the goal of replacing the selected rabbi with someone else. In extreme cases, the conflict between the rabbi’s supporters and his detractors could tear a community in two, leading to the establishment of a separate break-away community in the same locale.

A common solution was to appoint a second rabbi — usually one of the candidates who had initially been rejected. This, of course, represented a sweeping vote of no-confidence for the rabbi who *had* been officially chosen. This contentious reality posed a serious challenge to the community rabbi, especially if he was young and inexperienced. The appointment of two or more community rabbis was not unknown during the Middle Ages. Sometimes, this could derive from practical concerns: for example, if the incumbent rabbi grew old, and was not interested in continuing to work, or simply was unable to keep up with the needs of the community. In such cases, a young rabbi or alternatively a young Talmud scholar who had failed to obtain a rabbinic post by conventional means, could be appointed to assist the elderly rabbi with his duties. Such a move preserved the status and authority of the official rabbi yet at the same time meant that the majority of his duties would now be taken over by his “assistant.” Another possibility, that developed as urbanization began to overtake Eastern European Jewry, was to create sub-communities in the neighborhoods and suburbs of larger cities. These sub-communities could appoint their own rabbis and religious functionaries. Theoretically, the rabbis of these sub-communities were subject to the authority of the city’s official rabbi. However, because these sub-communities and secondary rabbis desired independence, this hierarchy could become more theory than practice. It should be noted that such cases of a “dual rabbinate,” were rooted usually not in organizational or structural concerns but simply internal communal conflicts. As described by Rabbi Eliyahu Meir Feivelson:

A large group of dissidents come to conquer and vanquish the city, so much so that a city can never appoint just one rabbi without being put under siege. With no other choice, what does one do? One selects, with a mighty [hand] and an outstretched arm and with great feats... two rabbis! And such a sight, which was unbelievable, but a few years ago, no longer elicits much wonder now. It has almost become the norm.

There are even cases of communities that appointed three or four rabbis, often without there being any substantial religious differences between the factions (e.g., Hasidim vs. Mitnagdim). The phenomenon of multiple rabbis in one community was not limited to the region discussed in this book. From other regions in Eastern Europe emerge numerous analogous accounts, in chronicles, halakhic literature, hagiography, scholarship and the public discourse. This could be in town communities such as Tovrig, מרוחובה, Kosava, Iwye, Izabelin, Berezne, Dzisna, Hadiach, לאפא, סקוריאני, Świsłocz, Voranava, Konotop, קידאן, Bereza Kartuska, Radziwiliszki, as well as larger urban communities such as Chelm, Minsk, and Polotsk. The sheer number of accounts, the fact that the issue was the subject of intensive discussion in the public discourse, and the lack of conflicting testimonies all point to a phenomenon that was quite common.

The appointment of a second (or even third or fourth) rabbi did not necessarily take place concurrently with the first rabbi’s appointment. Sometimes, an additional rabbi was chosen only much later, after the supporters of the unsuccessful candidate had amassed sufficient political power and financial resources. In other cases, an additional rabbi was appointed not due to dispute that arose during the selection process but rather from subsequent conflicts – a dispute that for one reason or another split the community along factional lines. For example, in some communities, people would put together a hasidic sub-community and demand their own rabbi. In either case, these circumstances could have a significant influence on the status of the rabbi who had originally been selected. It obviously impacted his symbolic status as the “master of the city,” but also exacted a practical toll: it impeded his ability to carry out his duties during protracted communal conflict. It could also take a toll on his financial wellbeing, his income being completely dependent on communal funds (more on this below). Sometimes this reality could even have an immediate effect on the day-to-day life of the community’s residents. First and foremost, paying the salary of not one but two rabbis diverted funds from other projects and initiatives: “the money that is spent to have many rabbis in the city, should be by law divided between the city’s paupers and the impoverished bourgeois,” as one contemporary put it. It also certainly did not contribute to the positive conception of local community rabbis, especially when two local rabbis would dispute the kashrut of the meat slaughtered in the town. As a rule, most sources that discuss this issue point to the fact that a preponderance of rabbis in one town or city, originating in internal communal disagreements and disputes, did not just perpetuate an already problematic situation but also made things worse. As one contemporary explains:

The number of rabbis is greater than the cities in Israel, for great is the number of cities in which there are two or three rabbis. How numerous are the disputes “for the sake of heaven” in the various cities! And there is no one to judge between one rabbi and another, to determine who will go and who will stay, who will assume the rabbinic throne and who will leave the city which has become a dreadful thing to God. <העיר אשר היתה לחרדת אלהים>

On the other hand, some people were quite happy to have multiple rabbis in one city. First and foremost were the young yeshiva students searching for open rabbinic posts. They certainly benefited from the growth in demand. Likewise, powerful or influential figures in the community were happy to have recourse to this option if the current rabbi did not fit their needs. As with other aspects of the rabbinate discussed in this book, the phenomenon of multiple rabbis in one community would only increase as the nineteenth century drew to a close. One proof of this is that already in the 1880s the issue was discussed extensively in the public discourse. However, the situation would become even worse, so much so that the editor of *Hamelitz* – who believed that “so many young rabbis trespass [on the positions of others] that no one even thinks to put an end to this offensive conflict” – decided to publish in his newspaper a collection of halakhic rulings from famous rabbinic figures that defined the practice of appointing another rabbi as “trespassing,” strictly forbidding it. However, as with the practice of selling rabbinic positions, halakhic arguments failed to inspire change, and the phenomenon would continue unabated deep into the twentieth century. Some sought to deal with the appearance of a second rabbi by turning to the halakhic-legal system, i.e., they would summon the offender to a halakhic court. However, most community rabbis simply reconciled themselves to the reality, primarily because they worried that overstepping their hand in their attempts to rid the town of a competitor could jeopardize their own position.

It bears mentioning that, again like other aspects of the rabbinate discussed in this book, a similar phenomenon can be seen among the non-Jewish clergy. The presence of two priests in one city was nothing unique, especially in communities with two Christian denominations. Naturally, this could sometimes result in conflict. As Shemaryahu Levin wrote in his colorful prose: “two priests treat each other just like two rabbis in a small town that cannot afford to pay either them – like two cats in one bag.”

Naturally, rivalries and tensions could develop between the two rabbis, often echoing the existing tensions between their respective supporters. In an attempt to resolve such tensions, arbitration could be sought. Rabbis from nearby cities, who were accepted by both sides of the conflict, could be called in. In most cases, however, these attempts proved ineffective. As Rabbi Eliyahu Feivelson attests: “when rabbis are brought to judge the city of destruction [to resolve the issue of] two appointed rabbis, they often adopt the famous compromise of Rav Papa: ‘therefore let us say [yes to] both.’ They say the ‘Kaddish of Rabbis’ [=they praise both rabbis] and travel in peace to their home, praising themselves for successfully satisfying both parties. As for the city, [it is consumed] by an eternal fire that cannot be extinguished!” <translating the puns about Rav Papa obviously required some liberties>

It did not help that no one had prepared the young rabbi to deal with the most common dilemma of the rabbinic vocation; he had never learned how to address highly sensitive or controversial situations. To name a few examples: internal disputes could revolve around the organization and management of the community; issues related to emigration; ideological and political affiliations; and the operation of the local educational institutions. The rabbi had to navigate carefully between his personal halakhic-ethical position on the issue and the social political reality in which he found himself. The danger of imperiling his community-paid income was a true sword of Damocles hanging over his head. “If the rabbi wishes to bring some order to the education [system] or the teachers” Rabbi Abraham Zakheim wrote, “if he wishes that not everyone who calls himself a teacher be so, and that not every boor and impoverished shop-owner with little precise or clear knowledge of the subject-matter should teach students, especially if they know nothing whatsoever about education or pedagogy... What shall the rabbi do if the candidate for teacher is someone’s relative and if that someone is powerful and rich? Will they forgive the rabbi for curtailing his income?”

An excellent example of such a contentious public issue was an incident that took place in the community of Slonim in the early 1880s. At that time the local rabbi, Yosef Rosen, launched a fundraising effort to build a new synagogue after the previous one had burnt down a year earlier. A group of local families, whose children were slated to be drafted into the Russian army, beseeched him to use the money instead to free their children from the draft. The rabbi, however, refused, citing the halakhah “one does not shift money from one charity to another.” The rabbi’s refusal, not surprisingly, plunged him into a bitter dispute with the desperate families.

As mentioned above, one forum in which the rabbi could express his views on such issues was the public sermon. However, unlike the itinerant preacher who had nothing to fear from the people of the city, whose salary was not paid by them, and who did not face the constant peril of dismissal, the community rabbi had to tread carefully. One option, the favorite strategy it seems, was to simply avoid broaching such issues – for example, it behooved the rabbis to avoid discussing how the lists of draftees to the Russian army were put together. The majority of rabbis simply did not discuss these issues publicly, fearing that it would bring down upon them the wrath of various community figures. Another option was to discuss timely issues but without taking a clear stance one way or another.

**The Rabbi and the Local Elites**

The phenomena discussed until this point were deeply rooted in the organizational structure of the Jewish community at the time, as well as the preferential statuses enjoyed by local elites. I refer to local figures who had amassed a significant amount of political or financial power (or both), and who exercised this power in local-community politics. They were the de-facto leaders of the Kahal and its institutions. As discussed previously, rabbinic writs of appointment already attest that community institutions did everything in their power to stop the community rabbi from amassing an undue amount of authority or influence. As Rabbi Yehuda Leib Margolies described acrimoniously:

<already translated for a previous chapter> In their haughtiness, the leaders and rulers of the city consider it beneath them <רם בעיניהם?> to appoint over themselves a famous, respectable, and righteous man. This would require them to submit to him, and to give him the power to punish wrongdoers for their crimes. <לעושי רעה על כל דבר פשע, it’s hard to capture the turn of phrase in English so I’ve just simplified> They prefer to choose a rabbi who will submit to them, one with no power. And when the rabbi wishes to correct some matter pertaining to the law in the city, everything will be done by consulting them. He will have to speak to them softly and flatter them [in order to convince them] to agree with him.

For this reason, a model that in Italy and Germany developed already in the late Middle Ages – the rabbi who is subject to the authority of the communal institutions – spread to communities throughout Europe. This did not relate to halakhic adjudication but rather to the rabbi’s place in the management of public life in the community, for example excommunication or collecting taxes. Thus, the rabbi was informed how the hierarchical structure of the local community would function from the beginning. For example, in the rabbinic writ given to Rabbi Yohanan ben Saadia by the community of Verona in 1539, it was stated that “as far as communal issues are concerned, the rabbi shall be obligated by any request made by the community or its leaders to enact or excommunicate or to agree about some measure or issue, or anything related to the community’s dealings with individuals and the many.” Likewise, in Vilna it was established that “when the leaders of the Kahal call the rabbi to participate in a meeting or gathering of the Kahal, for whatever purpose, he must come immediately without any delay. And it goes without saying that he may not fail to attend due to some judgement or private dealing.” These rules were enforced in different times and places, depending on the rabbi’s level involvement in the daily life of his community members. In the rabbinic writ given to Isaac Bernays by the community of Hamburg in 1821 this was spelled out in no uncertain terms: “the rabbi cannot rebuke any man for religious behavior or failure to observe the commandments.” In most rabbinic writs issued in our region, such matters were not so explicitly worded – the writ given to Bernays reflects the special circumstances of the Jewish communities in German-speaking Europe. Nevertheless, as modernization (and secularization) crept into the towns of Eastern Europe during the second half of the eighteenth century, many a rabbi feared that the right to admonish his community members would be taken away from him (see below).

Thus, even if no one openly questioned the rabbi’s right to adjudicate halakhah or to preside over a halakhic court, they were nevertheless careful to keep a firm system of checks and balances in place. For example, in the community of Berlin it was ruled that “in any court case or ruling, the rabbi must be accompanied by two judges who will be appointed by the leaders of the community.” Similar restrictions were placed on the rabbi when it came to conferring semikhah <סמיכת חבר>, the amount of money that could be exacted as a penalty in a halakhic court, as well as to whether or not <yes?> he could represent the community to external bodies. However, the restrictions placed on the rabbi not only related to his involvement in community life. In some communities, a rabbi was forbidden from engaging in any kind of negotiations or from leaving the city without receiving permission from the designated community institutions. Likewise, in some communities, laws were put in place to avoid nepotism. For example, there were rules as to whether or not the rabbi could appoint his relatives to public positions, what community pursuits <תחומי עיסוק?> they could engage in, and whether the rabbi was allowed to participate in legal proceedings in which they were involved.

As mentioned, as far as the local elites were concerned, the rabbi, by dint of his religious authority, and in some cases due to his personality, could easily become a competitor; the elites therefore consistently did their best to prevent this from happening. Thus, in many cases the rabbi was subject to the whims of the local elites. Examples emerge from rabbinic literature, chronicles, popular folklore, and numerous other sources, all pointing to a phenomenon that was widespread. The rabbi’s subservience to powerful leaders in the community was a consequence, among other things, of the fact that “the rabbi has neither a stick nor a whip to enforce his authority, and how, then, can he engage in battle with someone stronger than him?” If we bear in mind that more than a few rabbis owed their position to local elites, then this subservience could be viewed as “part of the deal.” Some claimed that the problem was exacerbated when the chosen rabbi was a local: in such cases, it was argued, his subordination to the elites was even greater.

This hierarchy had important ramifications for the personal and familial aspects of the rabbi’s life. Specifically, the rabbi was constantly worried that his term would not be renewed when the tenure set in his rabbinic writ came to an end. That he would be expelled forthwith for overstepping his bounds was also not out of the question. It should be recalled that for the rabbi, being dismissed did not just mean losing a source of income; it also meant that he would receive a negative reputation as someone who stood up for himself, as someone who refused to accept the authority of communal institutions. This could make getting a new rabbinic position in another community somewhat difficult. Therefore, the rabbi had basically no choice but to bend to the will of the rich and powerful, even when this was at the expense of his own honor as well as the honor of the rabbinate as a whole. As the Maharal put it: “the rabbi fears the bourgeois. And if he does not do as they wish, this will lead to many an obstacle.” This reality, which dated back to earlier periods, closely resembles what religious psychologists Malony and Hunt have referred to as a “push,” i.e., a situation in which a religious figure feels a lack of control over his area of activity. This, it seems, was the reason why many community rabbis avoided confronting local elites over one of the cardinal issues that dominated the discourse of nineteenth century Eastern European Jewry – how lists of Jewish draftees into the Russian army were put together?

If before the rabbi’s selection this tendency was clearly manifest in both the proceedings of the process as well as in the explicit wording of the rabbinic writ of appointment, then after his appointment it became abundantly clear that these were not just hollow promises but rather a permanent reality. At first, when the rabbi and elites first got to know each other, the latter would in some cases try to win over the former with an accommodating approach, sometimes even granting various favors. For the new rabbi, cooperation came with some clear advantages. Most notably it could serve him in good stead in the future when he needed the support of the elites to launch initiatives – especially those with communal significance. However, quite often, conflict with the local political elites was only a matter of time. Thus, Rabbi Eliyahu Akiva Rabinowitz claimed that “the slaughterers not only do not listen to him, they try to place themselves in charge of him. The bourgeois force him to follow their will, correcting him with what they consider good advice. The impertinent residents of the city <עזי פנים שבעיר> cast fear and awe upon him with their great strength. And the rabbi is still as a stone, because due to his young age, he trembles from the sound of a falling leaf and capitulates to [opposition] from every direction.” Our sources point to a long list of conflicts between community rabbis and the leaders of the community. <או המקבלים להם?> When a conflict did erupt – for example when a rabbi’s halakhic ruling was thought to impact their economic or public status – they had no qualms about putting the rabbi in his place and reminding him where he stood in the hierarchical pyramid of the community. As one contemporary explained:

The rabbis and *moreit tzedek* are also dependent on the desires of the leaders and rich men. And for example, even if one rich man is incensed at the rabbi for not paying him double the respect [he deserves], or [if the rich man grows angry] at the challenge posed (according to his warped logic) by the rabbi’s enactments, < או התגר לדעתו המשובשת בתקנותיו> then he will plot against [the rabbi] to depose him from his throne, despite his innocence. With ruses he will wage war against him and persecute him needlessly; he will attack the rabbi’s source of income, the rabbi’s salary for his work on behalf of the community, until the rabbi relents, seizes hold of the corner of the rich-man’s robe [beseeching for forgiveness]; [only then will the] rich man forgive him.

As mentioned, most rabbis made peace, some more than others, with this reality, especially when they realized that their options were fairly limited. Those who accepted these circumstances assumed that towing the line would allow them to fulfill the majority of the tasks and duties required of them while also keeping their jobs. And in many cases the well-behaved rabbi would earn a grace period during which he could dedicate himself to his work with little adversity. The problem was, as more than a few rabbis would learn, that even assenting to having one’s authority curtailed, brought only an illusory peace. As described above, the selection of a new rabbi could spark vicious disputes between different segments of the community. Participating in these disputes were men of political and economic power, members of interest groups (such as the slaughterers), as well as the family of the previous rabbi if an outsider was chosen, or alternatively those who opposed the rabbinate being inherited if the previous rabbi’s relative was chosen. <בצד מי שהתנגדו להעברת המשרה I assume you mean if the current rabbi is the heir> Naturally, even after one candidate was chosen, and even if the decision was accepted by the majority of community members, pockets of resistance would not just disappear overnight, especially among those from whom the decision exacted a personal, economic, or political toll. We thus see situations in which the rabbi was thrust into a protracted conflict with his detractors. Such struggles not only harmed the rabbi himself but also negatively impacted the public authority and status of his opponents <yes?>. As Rabbi Samuel Joseph Fuenn saw things: “these two authorities go into battle, the leadership versus the rabbinate, and they fight with rage until both fall with no hope of revival.”

In passing, it is worth noting that once again this phenomenon was echoed in the life of the rural priest in Russia. As explained by Gregory Freeze “\*\*\*”. These words are equally applicable to the status of the community rabbi during the same period.

**“One says its Kosher the Other Says it is Not”: The Rabbi versus the Butchers and the Slaughterers**

One of the more complicated relationships the rabbi had with community members was with the butchers and slaughterers. It should be recalled that the rabbi was deemed the highest halakhic authority when it came to the kashrut of food sold throughout the community, especially regarding the validity of ritual slaughter. <consider adding a note or something in the text explaining what a טריפה is, perhaps something like this: For the meat of an animal to be considered kosher it must not only be slaughtered according to strict rules, it must also have no significant diseases or physical injuries, both external and internal. For that reason, the slaughterer had to also check certain parts of the slaughtered animal in order to ascertain it was not considered a *tereifa*.> The practice was that the butcher would buy live animals, hand them over to the *shohet ubodek* (the ritual slaughterer and inspector) and only afterwards sell the meat in his store. Usually the slaughterers were seen as reliable when it came to keeping and enforcing the laws of kashrut. However, sometimes doubts would arise about the kashrut of a slaughtered animal, in which case, the final say belonged to the community rabbi. If the rabbi examined an animal and ruled that the meat was not kosher, the butcher was forced to sell the meat to a non-Jewish butcher or directly to the non-Jewish population, usually at a much lower price than what he would receive for kosher meat. According to some estimates the number of animals disqualified after slaughter can reach 25 per cent – a significant financial toll. To avoid financial loss, some butchers would sell non-kosher meat as if it were kosher, ignoring the rulings of the ritual slaughterers as well as the halakhic rulings of the rabbi. While, I do not claim that most butchers did not care about the laws of kashrut and were happy to sell the Jewish population non-kosher meat, the delicate balance of power certainly had the potential to erupt into full conflict between the rabbi and butcher. For example, the grounds for invalidating the meat were not always unambiguous; the rabbi could have, if he had wished, made a case for ruling it kosher. This could spark conflict with the butcher. Likewise, if a rabbi ruled several animals bought by a single butcher to be not kosher, the butcher would not be too pleased. In other words, rabbis and butchers naturally had what to argue about. If we recall that butchers were significant economic power-players in many communities, some even belonging to the local political and economic elites (who “hold the salaries of the slaughterers and rabbis in their hands like clay in the hand of a potter”) then it is no surprise that in such a battle the rabbi was at a marked disadvantage.

At the center of these dispute was the kashrut status of the slaughtered meat, a matter under the authority of the ritual slaughterer. Because the rabbi and slaughterer depended on each other for their financial wellbeing, their relationship could be equally fraught. The slaughterer’s right to practice, the validity of his slaughter and his salary all depended on the approval of the local rabbi. In many cases, a recommendation letter from the rabbi of the slaughterer’s previous community or from some other rabbinical authority was required. It is important to note that, in practice, the slaughterer was only paid for slaughtering animals that were ruled to be kosher. This was despite the explicit halakhic principle that “the slaughterer should be paid for invalid animals just as he is paid for kosher animals so that he shall have no incentive to be lenient in order to be paid.” There were rabbis who, as attested by Rabbi Aharon Hakohen, “received money from the slaughterers in exchange for their approval,” and who even defended slaughterers from attempts to depose them from their positions. Sometimes, however, local slaughterers would refuse to submit to the community rabbi’s authority, especially if the rabbi in question tended to be strict. Practically speaking, this was enough to kindle a dispute, especially if a young inexperienced rabbi was going up against an older, practiced slaughterer. The problem was exacerbated when the rabbi reached the conclusion that the slaughterer should not be trusted at all. This could be due to the latter’s religious or ethical profile, for example, due to the conflict of interests that emerged when the slaughterer also served as the community’s butcher, or due to practical concerns, such as his old age afflicting him with unsteady hands that could not properly render the slaughter valid. Furthermore, the slaughterer was required to periodically present his knives for the rabbi’s inspection and thus was constantly subject to rabbinical oversight. If the slaughterer’s reliability, skill, or religiosity did not stand up to the rabbi’s scrutiny, the rabbi could forbid eating animals slaughtered by him, or try to depose the slaughterer and appoint someone else in his stead. Besides these concerns, the rabbi could forbid eating the meat of a new slaughterer for economic-political reasons: for example, if it was thought that the new slaughterer was an interloper who was negatively impacting the income of other local slaughterers. <did I understand this correctly?> Such a concrete violation of the slaughterer’s authority and income necessarily forced him into conflict with the rabbi, sometimes even when the rabbi was the slaughterer’s relative.

In contemporary sources we find a number of disputes of this sort. For example, in the following account:

Dispute has devoured the cities in Poland, and there is almost not one city in which the rabbi and ritual slaughterer are not at odds. It is not a sincere dispute. Rather each one attempts to vex [the other] and they both try to cut off [each other’s] incomes. The rabbi wishes to depose the slaughterer, and the slaughterer finds the rabbi at fault, and each one finds supporters, using them to fuel the fire. And it becomes a raging blaze until no order or proper discipline [remains]. In my town, this unfanned <לא נופח?> fire has blazed for nine years, and the people all fight each other, <ונצו גם נעו> the supporters of the rabbi and the supporters of the slaughterer.

Refusing to accept the halakhic authority of the rabbi when it came to a matter of such central importance essentially represented a sweeping subversion of his authority as the local adjudicator. As one halakhic authority put it: “if the rabbi, master of the city, has no power against his slaughterers and butchers, what shall be of the Torah!?” The rabbi’s willingness to yield on this issue could lead to his authority being questioned in other halakhic areas, essentially rendering his very position irrelevant. Thus, many rabbis sought to nip the trend in the bud, adjuring slaughters to not practice without their permission, or by wielding letters of support written by the great rabbinic figures of the time. But this was not all. Sometimes in a single community a number of slaughterers were active and, as is only natural, competition could lead to outright fights. Some slaughterers would try to invalidate the meat of their competitors and would seek to enlist the rabbi’s halakhic view to support their claim. The rabbi could thus find himself being drawn into someone else’s battle. And in truth there was usually no escape, for whether or not he got involved, someone would be upset.

Because they were rooted in personal interests, especially economic interests, conflicts of this sort could be severe and could sometimes spread to the entire community and even beyond, each side enlisting the support of people outside of the community (such as the community’s former rabbis). In some cases, matters would devolve into attempts to involve government authorities. In other cases, some sought to settle the dispute using arbitration. In the most extreme cases, the dispute between the supporters of the rabbi and the supporters of the butcher could actually split the community in two. The latter could organize themselves as a sub-community, establish their own synagogue, select their own rabbi, and hire the services of a slaughterer who did not acknowledge the community rabbi’s authority. This in turn could spark another kind of dispute. The upstart slaughterer could be considered a “trespasser” whose meat, according to most halakhic authorities, was to be treated as if it were not kosher. One famous example of the aforementioned issues took place in Kharkiv in the late 1870s. A group of butchers in the city hired their own slaughterer who did not acknowledge the authority of the community rabbi, Avraham Yehezkel Arlozorov. When the rabbi publicly declared that the meat sold in the store of one of these butchers <slaughterers> was not kosher, conflict erupted and even spread beyond the confines of the community. To settle the matter, some of the most famous rabbinic figures of the time were brought to intervene: Rabbi Elhanan Spector, Rabbi Eliyahu Haim Meisel, Elazar Moshe Ish Horowitz, Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin to name a few. The dispute in Kharkiv, which due to its extensive coverage in the Jewish press had an influence beyond the community, was not considered an exceptional occurrence in the discourse of the time. For example, in the first decade of the nineteenth century, Rabbi Dov Ber Helman, the Rabbi of the Jewish Community in Janavičy in Vitebsk wrote as follows “it is an open secret that a rabbi [is opposed by the local] slaughterer who raises his head in defiance, disparaging both the rabbi and his rulings, to the point where he will sometimes claim that all the rabbi’s rulings and ignorance result in people eating non-kosher meat, and not even the bourgeois seek to blunt him.” The extent of the phenomenon was so great that Rabbi Eliyahu David Rabinowitz-Teomim who was involved in the arbitration of a number of disputes among butchers, slaughterers, and rabbis, concluded that the only way to solve the problem was by establishing “enactments regarding the rabbis and slaughterers in cities and their disputes. My suggestion is that the rabbis of every district must watch over each other, and when such issues arise, three rabbis should be chosen, and they should arrive in the city in which there is a dispute, be it is to serve as intermediaries or to give the proper ruling and pursue justice.” However, just like the purchase of rabbinic positions, Rabinowitz-Teomim’s words were unheeded. Not only did his suggestion impinge upon the interests of various power-players in different communities, there was regardless no central system in place during this time and in this region for ruling, judging or enforcing such an enactment.

**The Rabbi and the Dayyanim**

Even if the rabbi developed a reasonable working relationship with the butchers and slaughterers in his community, this was no guarantee for peace. Fights with slaughterers and butchers were rooted in economic interests. However, another potential source of conflict with the community rabbi, in urban or town communities, emanated from a group whose issue with the rabbi was usually religious or halakhic in nature – I am referring to the dayyanim and *morei tzedek*.

The roots of this conflict began already during the selection process. As we have discussed, many young Talmud scholars saw dayyan and *moreh tzedek* positions as a springboard to the communal rabbinate. Generally speaking, when they did receive a rabbinic position, it would be in a different community than the one in which they had served as minor religious functionaries. Sometimes, however, older local dayyanim and *morei tzedek* would serve a community for many years. When it came time to select a community rabbi they thought themselves to be the natural candidates. It should be noted that these were usually people with much experience ruling on issues of kashrut and/or presiding over financial disputes, and some of them even were renowned beyond the confines of their community. However, as discussed in previous chapters, professionalism or years of experience did not necessarily stand one in good stead when it came to being selected as rabbi. Experienced dayyanim or *morei tzedek* were viewed by the local elites as potential sources of competition, people who had at their disposal not only scholarly renown but also a familiarity with the local political groups and alignments within the community. Because the local elites generally preferred a candidate from another community, local dayyanim and *morei tzedek* viewed the community rabbi as an obstacle to their aspirations for communal advancement as well as an affront to their professionalism – whether he was a young inexperienced rabbi or a rabbi who had already served one or two communities, and certainly if he was appointed as the head of the city’s court. We thus see these scholarly figures constantly questioning community rabbis’ halakhic rulings, at times even enlisting the views of rabbis from other communities to reinforce their indignation. Dispute over halakhic issues was a normal and accepted part of the world of halakhic adjudication. And one could think that such opposition was nothing more than a case of fruitful halakhic argument. However, when we find a local rabbi turning to a well-known halakhic authority, such as Rabbi Yitshak Elchanan Spektor, asking for his opinion about his halakhic ruling that does not suit the opinions of “all the learned people in the city,” one gets the impression that the disputes were not entirely sincere. This blow to the rabbi’s authority could become heated when the young rabbi interfered in issues that were considered the purview of dayyanim and *morei tzedek.* בין מלכתחילה ובין כאלה שהובאו לפתחם בתקופה ש'בין גברא לגברא’. <not sure exactly what you mean here but I think it can possibly be omitted in translation> Matters were even worse when the young rabbi offered an opinion about complex halakhic issues. This phenomenon, which was already evident in the earliest years of the community rabbinate, was seen in the eyes of many halakhic authorities as unbefitting, to put it lightly. As Rabbi Meir Katzenellenbogen  (Maharam of Padua) said already in the sixteenth century: “an even greater evil I have seen: that one young yeshiva student who has just received ordination will praise himself loudly, take a staff and whip in hand, and begin ruling on the laws of divorce, without seeking the advice of other older halakhic authorities in the city. They should leave such rulings to those older men who are more experienced, and they should observe and learn until they are older.”

A classic example of a fraught relationship between the rabbi and the communal dayyanim was the case of Rabbi Yosef Zechariah Stern in Šiauliai in North Lithuania. In the summer of 1861, after the community rabbinate had been vacant for almost eight years, Stern was selected. A member of a rabbinic family, having previously served for eleven years as the community rabbi of Jasionówka, and having just before this appointment published the first volume of his responsa *Zekher Yehosef*, Stern was the natural choice and the most qualified candidate. However, shortly after he was selected, “a great dispute erupted in our city between the rabbi and the dayyanim,” a dispute that grew so bad that it split the community in two for several years. A review of contemporary sources suggests that the catalyst of this dispute was the question of the rabbi’s right to intervene in halakhic questions brought before the local court. For example, the validity of a *get* which the dayyanim ratified and the rabbi invalidated, as well as questions related to the kashrut of local meat. In this case, the dayyanim claimed: “for while the rabbi’s knowledge may be broad in the sea of Talmud, he is not experienced in practical rulings and will thus render a distorted judgment.” In other words, while the rabbi’s theoretical knowledge was not in question, they claimed that he should refrain from interfering in questions under the purview of the local court. While this may have made sense in another context, it was an odd claim to make about Stern. Stern had years of experience giving halakhic rulings with communal significance before arriving in Šiauliai. His published responsa were evidence of this. Such disputes were not a rare occurrence in Jewish communities, and usually the sides would find a *modus vivendi* that allowed the rabbinic institution to continue to function properly. In this case, not only did neither side back down, but all attempts to resolve the dispute – including attempts at arbitration led by famous rabbinic figures, costing the community hundreds of rubles – amounted to nothing. And if this was not enough, in 1870 Stern tried to depose one of the local slaughterers, rekindling and exacerbating the dispute. Further attempts by the rabbinical arbiters to put an end to the controversy yielded no results.

While intense disputes and attempts to undermine the authority of the local rabbinic court were not unheard of in Šiauliai, a second look at the sources may provide a specific reason for the initial eruption of the conflict as well as its protracted duration. The three judges who presided over the court at the time were Eliezer Lunz (1812–1892) who had served previously for sixteen years as the rabbi of Tytuvėnai and began to serve as the dayyan of Šiauliai beginning in 1851; Haim Rabinowitz (1831–1876), son of Šiauliai’s previous rabbi and author of the work *Hafla’a Shebearakhin*; and Michael Deutsch (1810–1884) who had previously served as the rabbi of לייזוה and שאווילן and had served as dayyan of Šiauliai since 1854. Deutsch was close to the previous community rabbi. It seems that the latter had even helped him receive his dayyan position in the first place. As one can see, two of the three judges were twenty or so years older than Stern. The third was the son of the previous rabbi; presumably he thought he should have been chosen, not Stern. While we do not know if the first two dayyanim applied for the rabbinic vacancy, we know for a fact that Michael Deutsch served in between rabbinic tenures as the head of the local court and considered himself a natural successor. Thus, Michael Deutsch’s hostility towards Yosef Zechariah Stern went beyond the internal communal and familial discourse. <העוינות שחש מיכאל דייטש כלפי יוסף זכריה שטרן חצתה את קווי התיחום של השיח הפנים משפחתי והקהילתי.> A review of Deutsch’s correspondence with contemporary rabbis and halakhic authorities allows us to reconstruct the challenges Stern faced in his first years serving as rabbi in Šiauliai. During the aforementioned dispute, revolving around the validity of a *get* that was ratified by the court of Šiauliai, Deutsch tried to enlist the support of other halakhic authorities. In 1864 he turned to Shlomo Kluger, the Rabbi of ברזאן in Galicia one of the most important halakhic authorities of the time. In an addendum to Kluger’s responsum, which unambiguously supported Deutsch’s stance, he wrote that “ <I’m afraid I don’t know what this means:<מסדר אחד בעל זכר יהוסף הנהיג לסדר שם דוב דב And I said to him it is not good that he should innovate in order to bask in the glory of his innovations. And why should he deviate from the rest of people and trust in his own wisdom when his innovative perspective is [actually] nothing?” This harsh and dismissive attitude towards Šiauliai’s rabbi, clearly shows us Deutsch’s opinion of the “master of the city.” This was echoed in a responsum from 1864 which claimed that “Rabbi Yosef Zechariah in his hubris and pride believes himself powerful enough <כי כביר מצאה ידו > to challenge even our Rabbi Eliyahu!” In light of this, it is not particularly surprising that at the bottom of some of his letters and responsa, written during Stern’s tenure, Deutsch styles himself “master of the city.”

Deutsch’s anger and indignation were not simply because he had failed to “win” the rabbinic throne. That Stern was relatively young, was willing to independently rule halakha according to his own considerations, as was willing to contest the opinions of three experienced dayyanim certainly played a part. This sentiment is expressed well in a note the Deutsch added many years later to a responsum authored in 1837, when he was 27, during his first tenure as a community rabbi:

This matter I wrote in my young age, when I first came to reside in the city of לאווזעווא, a small city with few people and a lack of books. And because I was still young, I crawled and feared to stand up for my opinion and to establish the correct law according to the determination of my young mind. Therefore, I proposed the matter before the three pillars of halakhic adjudication upon whom I relied, <ונראה ומודע להם? > to know what the dayyanim in Israel should do, and how they truly ruled about a matter that is so common in the great cities. <I don’t understand how this connects to your arguments; are you suggesting that Deutsch expected Stern to be equally humble?>

As time passed, not only did the controversy grow from a small squabble between the community’s dayyanim and rabbi into a conflict of communal proportions, the local Russian authorities even tried to get involved – though with no more luck than anybody else. Furthermore, the controversy made its way onto pages of the Hebrew press of the time and a seemingly unrelated story accusing Deutsch of embezzling funds the community set aside for orphans also rose to prominence. <?> Because Deutsch enjoyed the wide support of the Jewish community in Šiauliai, although Stern remained the community’s official rabbi, in practice, he was completely marginalized from public life.

True, not every dispute between community rabbis and local dayyanim led to an actual split in the community as took place in Šiauliai. Nevertheless, the tension, and often hostility, between the two groups was a common and well-known issue. At the center of these disputes and conflicts with dayyanim (and sometimes *morei tzedek* as well) stood the very concept of the *mara deatra* – “master of the city,” and it was subjected to the inspection of public opinion. In theory, the power of the “master of the city” was relevant only to halakhah. However, as most residents of the community were not learned enough to truly understand the subtle differences lying at the basis of scholastic, halakhic disputes, the resolute stance of local Talmud scholars against the ruling of the community rabbi could be viewed as an attempt to undermine his status and authority on a far deeper level.

In this context it bears mentioning that the dispute between rabbi and dayyanim had further repercussions for the life of the community rabbi. As mentioned, the rabbi often had trouble finding companionship in the community; it was hard to find someone with whom he could discuss Halakhah and Talmud. The only people who were actually capable of engaging him in this kind of discourse were the dayyanim and/or *morei tzedek*. The conflict with people who should have been his most natural companions, left the rabbi intellectually, and even socially, isolated – just one more problem with which he had to contend.

The picture that arises from all these accounts, i.e., a series of challenges that were foisted upon the community rabbi shortly after his appointment, is a very problematic one to say the least. In practice, it seems, that for any rabbi who wished to stand up for his principles and views, especially his conception of the role of the community rabbi, conflict with one (or all of) the three mainstays of the community – the economic, political and intellectual – was inevitable.

**The Rabbi and the “People”**

But it was not only the elites who sought to curb the rabbi’s authority. The middle, and even lower classes also had an axe to grind. Despite the attempts of rabbis to cast themselves as spiritual leaders, these social classes saw the rabbi as a Torah scholar, an expert at resolving halakhic issues, primarily those pertaining to laws of kashrut. <איסור והיתר> However, and in contrast to trends in the hasidic world of the time, when it came to wider issues, such as the approach to education, moral dilemmas, or public behavior and conduct, many members of the community gave little weight to the rabbi’s view; they seldom even consulted his opinion. The rabbis were well aware of this. As one put it:

When some matter of halakhah eludes the members of the community, they send their servants to seek our opinion. The Torah teachers and the *beit midrash* scholars if they are faced by some difficulty in the meaning of the Gemara, Rashi and Tosfot, they will have scholastic conversations with us to show-off their trenchant skills and vast knowledge. However, the bourgeois will not come to us to learn about education or measures for bettering society. And who shall listen to us if we urge them to do charitable deeds, to raise funds to improve the general education and to see to the needs of the poor and all such similar matters that are based on knowing the ways of the world <דרך ארץ> and require financial expenditure?

During those years the region suffered from an economic crisis. Some, therefore, even claimed that the rabbinate was an unnecessary burden on dwindling community funds. In the words of contemporaries, especially those suffering the most from the economic hardship, the rabbi is “another idle mouth to feed.” כברייה שאוכלת ואינה עושה > < While these social strata lacked the sheer coercive power of the traditional elites, when they thought that the rabbi had overstepped the his authority, they had a number of other methods at their disposal – from not accepting his authority, to, in exceptional cases, the exercise of verbal and even physical violence.

The curbing of the rabbi’s authority – or to put it differently, his complete dependence on the members of his community – was not limited to organizational or technical factors. Sometimes the rabbi had to defend himself against a public smear campaign; to bend his opinion on public matters to better fit the views of “that terrifying many headed beast that is called ‘the masses’”. This was regardless of whether or not a particular issue had the support of his rabbinic colleagues in adjacent towns or neighborhoods or even the support of the rabbinic leaders of the generation. To make matters worse, some rabbis were forced to give up on their authority even in matters pertaining to prayer and the synagogue. In other cases, the rabbi saw moral wrongdoings taking place right before his eyes but had no choice but to look the other way and swallow his words. As Yehiel Michael Pines, a writer who was intimately familiar with the community rabbinate, put it: “For the towns that appoint for themselves a head of court, might as well have made a[n explicit] condition of his employment that he listen to wrongdoing yet be silent, see corruption and be still, all for the sake of peace.” While the rabbi was usually considered the local halakhic authority, there were cases where he had to deal with attempts of force upon him another approach. This was not just in small towns but even in larger communities with famous and prestigious rabbis who enjoyed generous salaries. This is because “their entire will and yearning to appoint a great person as the head of court of their community is so they can bask in the glory of the greatness that resides in their midst. It is not to benefit from his leadership and his overflowing moral power, his greatness in Torah, or his just ways.” In this context it is worth mentioning that the involvement of members of the middle class in the affairs of the community rabbi was part of a wider trend. Aleksander Zederbaum, editor of *Hamelitz*, who was at home with the discourse of the time put it as follows: “over the last twenty years (1860–1880), our eyes have seen the emergence of a new [phenomenon] among Russian Jewry: public opinion. It has its advocates and its dissidents who [in periodicals] publicly weigh in using their intellect and logic on everything they deem important.” Thus, as the political power of the middle – and even lower – classes rose, especially in the second half of the eighteenth century, so they became more actively involved in the rabbinate. “Can such a rabbi wage a holy war?!” Rabbi Avraham Zeev Bernstein asked. “Can he launch a campaign on behalf of the honor of religion, to conquer the young ones, to teach them to love the Torah and fear heaven, to influence its ‘owners’ <בעליו???> and demand that they keep the practical commandments – [can he do any of this] after all his flattery and submissiveness, after dissembling <כל הנפתולים>, bowing, and prostrating before them?” As a result of this trend, the rabbinic world began to be filled with a growing sense of crisis. Some voiced the view that the selection process had to be reevaluated, and that the committee be comprised only of the “tovim of the city, the men of Torah and virtue.”

It is important to note that the average Jew would usually not publicly challenge the deeds of powerful community figures; the repercussions were not worth it. Therefore, the rabbi, who was a far easier target, became the object of their dissatisfaction. He was considered culpable not only because he was seen as someone who cooperated with an immoral and unjust system but also because he benefited as a result. Sometimes this could lead to a complete split between the rabbi and large swathes of the community, or at least its representatives. In such conflicts the rabbi generally lacked the upper hand. “He trembles and quakes with fear from the beadle and butcher. And he is like a doormat to the lowliest of tailors,” as I.L. Peretz put it. An echo of the deep sense of humiliation experienced by the rabbi of the time arises from the following passage written by Avraham Zackheim. To a great extent it encapsulates the state of the community rabbinate in Eastern Europe during the second half of the nineteenth century:

Every strongman or arrogant person can damage the rabbi and harm his livelihood. For we see in the communities of our land, both big and small, that rabbis are sitting on pins and needles because of certain individuals who oppose them. [It could be because] the rabbi did something that they did not like, whether it be a private matter or something public, or [the person in question] did not win a halakhic court case presided over by the rabbi, or [some other matter deriving from] jealousy, pride, and competition. And for this reason, rabbis are afraid to involve themselves in public matters, for it is impossible to please everyone. And the rabbi cannot simply refuse to listen to what they have to say or ignore what they do, for his material circumstances are uncertain; he depends on them and fears them more than is befitting. <you quoted the following sentences above>: If the rabbi wishes to bring some order to the education [system] or the teachers, if he wishes that not everyone who calls himself a teacher be so, and that not every boor and impoverished shop-owner with little precise or clear knowledge of the subject-matter should teach students, especially if they know nothing whatsoever about education or pedagogy... What shall the rabbi do if the candidate for teacher is someone’s relative and if that someone is powerful and rich? Will they forgive the rabbi for curtailing his income? Furthermore, the rabbi generally lacks spiritual or material influence to force the students and their parents to heed his voice.

And all of this is like naught compared to the many troubles and evils that will erupt and challenge the rabbi if he has the gall to try saving the oppressed from his oppressors (who are usually powerful strong men). For when a man harms one of [these oppressors] it is [considered] a “mitzva” to persecute and oppress him as much as possible, and in their cities, they have great power to harm others, especially the rabbi. And there are many more things of this type related to public matters as we see in the communities of Israel and as is known to all. <consider omitting this sentence>

The accepted practice for settling these kinds of disputes was an arbitration council usually comprised of rabbis serving in neighboring cities. However, we see in many cases that the effectiveness of such a body was very limited, especially because the interested parties involved in these disputes tended not to accept any compromise that would require them to relinquish their power or give up on economic profit. For this reason Rabbi Abraham Zackheim claimed that “if only the rabbis would be wise and abandon private, small matters and band together to help each other, to raise up and strengthen the circumstance of the rabbis and the rabbinate, to stand beside a persecuted rabbi at no cost, to come to his city and rebuke his persecutors as much as possible, and to restore peace and order – then they could free themselves from the difficult situation in which they currently find themselves.” This idea, as expected, never came to fruition – because it would require the permission of the government, which as we have seen did not recognize the spiritual rabbi regardless, and also because the rabbinic world of that time found it difficult to engage in any kind of public activity that required widespread cooperation. Likewise, the proposal discussed in 1913 at the founding assembly of the Agudas Harabbonim <<spelling?>> in Poland – to create a super-rabbinical body entrusted with settling disputes between rabbis and their communities – was never realized.

In spite of everything said, it behooves us to ask why the concept of “honor of Torah,” embodied and represented by the figure of the rabbi, had no meaning in the minds of many contemporaries? While it is tempting to attribute the lack of respect to processes of secularization that began to enter into the Jewish societies in this region beginning in the late nineteenth century, such a theory fails to stand up to historical criticism. As we have seen above, attempts to curtail the community rabbi’s authority, sometimes reaching the point of unapologetic derision or effrontery, were quite common even in earlier periods. Therefore, because this was a society in which a religious ethos played such a central role in the minds and hearts of the population, the answer to this question must be sought, at least in part, in the figure of the rabbi himself. As we described in the first part of this book, two interrelated processes during the nineteenth century significantly contributed to the declining esteem for the rabbinate: the surfeit of unqualified students with semikhah and the intense competition over open rabbinic positions. Thus, while Rabbi Yaakov David Wilowsky could claim that “the rabbis in large cities and towns were certainly great in Torah, and when a large city wished to select a rabbi they could be very picky,” he also alluded to a pervasive problem when he contrasted this to “the rabbis in small towns who are not all particularly learned or talented in Torah study.” Furthermore, in light of the corrupt selection process that preceded the rabbi’s appointment, some claimed that “the money spent in exchange for the rabbinate is the main reason for the lowliness of Torah in our land.” In other words, corruption meant that a rabbi selected could not be guaranteed to have a high high scholarly or moral profile. The less suitable candidates usually found a place in rural communities or small towns. Naturally, in such cases (which were certainly not rare), people would before long realize what kind of rabbi they had, for example when it came to his ability to rule on halakhic issues. This determined the attitude of rural and town Jewry to the rabbi, allowing them to overcome the lofty conception of the rabbi as “the master of the city.” So prominent was this phenomenon that Rabbi Yehudah Leib Graubart publicly denounced it in unambiguous terms: “there are fools that do not see the world as it really is and do not realize the scorn and ridicule that is rained down upon them, and they deliver ridiculous sermons and praise themselves thinking that everyone enjoys [hearing] their fantasies and words.” And indeed, some of those who had to listen to such rabbis could actually justify a derisive attitude by noting the critiques emerging from the rabbinic world itself; those unsuited for semikhah were not much loved in rabbinic circles either. As one important rabbi of the time, Rabbi Haim Halberstam, put it in one of his responsa: “pay no heed to the rabbis of towns who prattle and make noise but do not understand the matter.” This, it seems, is the context for Yaakov Lipschitz’s words written in the early 1870s:

And while there may indeed be found in the medium and small towns great rabbis and sages who are acquainted with the needs of the era and know how to weigh their words carefully and with justice, what can they do in our time when the Torah is on the verge of collapse, and a rabbi who was less fortunate and did not merit to be appointed in a famous or prominent city will not muster the confidence to stand before the gates <?> and reveal his true opinion, to act as an “authority”?

When the typical community rabbi looked around him, he could not help but notice that the rabbis appointed by the Hasidim or the heads of yeshivot were treated very differently; they enjoyed a status that at its core was far different than their own, and they enjoyed no small amount of authority and influence. These two groups of rabbis benefited from their special status, and although each one derived it from a different source, they had similar public profiles – they were accorded almost limitless authority over halakhic adjudication in their communities and were truly treated as spiritual and moral authorities. This was a consequence of the fact that their statuses did not depend on a local communal institution. They rather drew their authority from the scholarly/spiritual-religious powers ascribed to them by their students and followers. Therefore, as Mendel Piekarz has shown, there was a large gap between the self-conception of members of the traditional rabbinate and the leaders of hasidic courts. This reality certainly did not contribute to the self-conception of the community rabbi as a leader; it certainly detracted from his motivation to overcome the challenges that stood before him. Therefore, as I.L. Peretz wrote with no small amount of cynicism: “the rabbi’s authority extends to nothing but the questions of women and the gizzards of chickens.”

When a rabbi realized he had been embroiled in a severe conflict with members of his community, he essentially had two options. One was to leave his position and to search for a new position elsewhere. The problem was, as mentioned above, that there was a low supply of open rabbinic positions; few rabbis jumped at the prospect of resuming the job-search. The other option, usually the preferable one, was to make every effort to hold onto his position within the city, even at the price of navigating a protracted dispute with large swathes of his community. This, for example is precisely what was done by the rabbi of the town of Pakruojis in Lithuania, Abraham Joshua Heschel, when he found himself in 1890s embroiled in conflict with the majority of his community – he held fast and refused to relinquish his position.