

INTERVIEWING RABBIS

by Rabbi Yisroel Belsky ztl

QUESTION 28: INTERVIEWING RABBIS

A community has been talking with a Rabbi for several months about his becoming the Rabbi of their community. There was never mention that any other Rabbi is being considered, and the only thing standing in the way has been 'logistical' problems. If another Rabbi is now recommended, how quickly should the first Rabbi be told that another Rabbi is being considered? Can telling the first Rabbi be delayed for several weeks until the community decides if the second Rabbi is a viable choice, especially if the second candidate is a long-shot, and there is a concern that the first Rabbi will be alienated by implying that the community wants to 'do better'?

RABBI BELSKY'S ANSWER

I think that if I were in the shul, and I was interviewing the Rabbi, I think it would be to our benefit to tell him, "The shul interviewed someone else, even though they were very impressed by you. But, you know how it is in shuls -- many people want to be involved in making the decisions, and they are going through the process". If something like this is not said, and after a few weeks he's told that he will not be taken, and is told, "We don't have funds," or this-and-that, he'll be crushed, because he'll know he was being led along.

QUESTION

Let's say he's been told already that it's very likely that he will be the choice.

RABBI BELSKY

Tell him the facts. Say, "I still feel that you're the best person. The people in the shul also feel that way, but this is the process with shuls". It has to be presented in a way that is not offensive.

QUESTION

So we should be as up front as possible?

RABBI BELSKY

For his good and for yours. But do it in a way that will honor him. Be careful not to demean him.

I remember when the gabbai went around in a certain shul, he walked over to the person next to me and said, "Please daven kabbalos Shabbos (Friday evening prayers, that involve a lot of singing)" But

the person, who was quite good, declined. The gabbai said, "I'm desperate. I don't have anyone else. Please daven." The person declined again. The gabbai had to go away and ask someone else.

I told the gabbai, "That's not the way to do it. Let me give you a hint. Next time, go over to him and say, 'We have a whole bunch of people who are itching to daven, but most people want you. People are looking forward to your doing it.' But if you tell him that you want him because you have no one else, then it comes out sounding that if you had someone else you wouldn't want him. It's better if he is reminded of all his wonderful qualities, of how good he is.

NEXT WEEK'S QUESTION 29: RESERVING FOOD

The dining room at my son's yeshiva has a rule that half hour after a meal begins, if food is left over, people can put away food to eat later. My son's friend said he went to get food exactly a half hour after the meal had begun, and no food was left - but he saw that others had already put food aside in bowls. He wanted to know if he could take the food from those bowls.

NEXT WEEK'S QUESTION 30: PARKING LOT 'NEXT DOOR'

The parking lot next to a hospital charges several dollars, but a block away is a small shopping center. Can one park at the shopping center, and then walk to the hospital? There are no signs up that say "for customers only". Does it depend on how crowded the shopping center parking lot is?

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