

"HOW TO BE A RABBINIC 'BAALEBUS'"

*Ten Commandments, Some of which Apply to All Laymen,
and Some Specifically to Non-Functioning Rabbis*

A) The מצוות עשה:

1. Respect your Rabbi's authority. There is a decided difference between your *היתר הוראה* and his status as *מרא לאתרא*; it is akin to the difference between taking out OUT a marriage license and being married. He, not you, has the obligation and the authority to *pasken*. He is your *רב*, and neither your *סמיכה* nor your *לומדות* nor your appeal to higher authority (such as your Rosh Yeshiva) will outweigh his authority. Respect it--and him!

2. Be mindful of his prestige and sensitive to his feelings. As your Rabbi, his prestige will reflect upon you as well. Recognize his own need to maintain his reputation.

Story told to me by my uncle, Rabbi J.M. Baumol about his friend, Rabbi Pinchas Hirschprung of Montreal, both graduates of Yeshiva Chachmel Lublin. When Hirschprung was a very young man, about 20-21, and an acknowledged *עילורי*, went to visit Rav of Vilna, Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzensky זצ"ל and engaged him in *redn* in *lernen*. R. Chaim Ozer quoted a *גמרא* as *ה"א דף הולין*, but Hirschprung corrected him, saying, "it's on *ה"ב דף י"ב*." The former repeated his citation, and the latter got up to get a *Gemara* and check it--to prove he was right. However, R. Chaim Ozer gently placed his hand on H's shoulder and dissuaded him, and turned the conversation to other matters. H. was perplexed at this conduct; why not check it out? However, when he returned home and looked it up--it turned out R. Chaim Ozer was right, and he had kept him from checking it out earlier so as to avoid having him embarrassed publicly!

3. Befriend your Rabbi. Because of the peculiar nature of the rabbinate, there's hardly a more solitary position. He's generally lonely and needs friends. Remember: there but for the grace of G-d...

4. Encourage your Rabbi to take leadership positions in the community. Shuls tend to be parochial and provincial, and feel that since they pay the salary of a Rabbi he ought to do nothing more than tend to their needs. But as a Rabbi yourself, you know better, and so help him establish leadership in a much wider context and so make a greater contribution to Israel and Torah.

