

The Institution of the Eastern Charedi *T'shuva* Movement and the Renewal of the Local Sephardic Rabbinate

Nissim Leon

This article demonstrates one of the effects of the Eastern Charedi "*T'shuva*"-repentance, movement on the very foundation of religious life of Eastern (Sephardic) Jews in Israel- the authority of the local rabbis.

At the center of this issue is the contribution of the *T'shuva* movement which was established by Eastern-Charedi rabbis for the purpose of implementing the renewal of the local Sephardic rabbinate. The Eastern Charedi *T'shuva* movement also was and is a source of local religious initiatives, which grows alongside preachers and local Halachic guides.

It also contributes to various innovative and creative rabbinic projects and undertakings in the image of the traditional Sephardic rabbinate, and wish to invest it with authority as well as envelop its community with charedi trappings.

It desires to shift from a rabbinate whose power and authority rests on a formal position which is recognized by the governmental authorities, to a rabbinate which is becoming increasingly intermeshed, whose source of authority is drawn from voluntary local enterprises. These ventures adhere to the religious message of a return to their own roots and traditions. It uses charedi tools and ethos to bring about this calling, and to spread it about as an all-Israeli idea.

A description such as this can be used by us as a source from a different perspective when viewing the Eastern-Charedi *T'shuva* movement in Israel. The shift is from an ethnic movement which appears to be dealing with religious missionizing, to a religious movement which strives towards ethnic renewal, in which one of its expressions is the change through which it brought some backbone to the local Sephardic rabbinate.