



# 613 Seconds

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## 613 Seconds with Rabbi Yosef Rosenfeld



### Can you tell us a little about yourself?

I moved to Baltimore about 17 years ago with my wife Tova. I had always been impressed with the Baltimore community as one of Shalom and cohesiveness, and with Rabbonim who are respected by the community. I came to learn in the Kollel of Ner Yisrael, which is still a very important part of my day.

### What else are you involved in?

About 3 ½ years ago, I was approached by Rav Mordechai Shuchatowitz, who is the head of the Baltimore Bais Din. There was a need for an Administrator for the Bais Din. At the same time, I had been learning mediation skills, at the encouragement of my father, who is a divorce mediator. I accepted the position, and am proud to serve our community.

### Can you tell us a little more about the Bais din?

The Bais Din was founded 25 years ago to serve as a community institution for resolving disputes according to halachah. The Bais Din typically sees about 75 to 80 new filings a year. While some of those cases need to go through

a formal adjudication process, some of them can be resolved by an agreement between the parties.

Often the parties in conflict have a prior relationship, whether it is as relatives or friends. We always offer the parties an opportunity to resolve the issue through a mediation process. If a formal adjudication process is required, we are proud to have a roster of Dayanim who are committed to a process of honesty and integrity.

### What types of cases do you normally see?

Many of our cases are monetary disputes. These can range from small claims of a few hundred dollars, to large scale business transactions involving millions of dollars. Some cases are relatively simple and quick, while others are complex and require multiple sessions.

Another area that we (unfortunately) deal with is separation and divorce issues. It is the goal of the Bais Din to resolve these cases in a spirit of Emes and Shalom, given their sensitive nature.

### Does the Bais Din have an educational component?

As a community institution, we are always available for Shiurim and programming to the public about topics that relate to Halacha and monetary issues. Choshen Mishpat is an area of Halacha that relates to the average person in daily life in a host of situations. Some examples would be the Halachic implication of giving one's word, the imperative to pay workers on time, obligations to one's neighbor in joint areas of property, and proper structuring of loans that pay a re-

turn.

### Is there anything specific you would like to educate the public about?

Yes- I would like to briefly discuss the Halacha that prohibits one Jew from taking the other to secular Court when the Defendant is willing to go to Bais Din. Adjudication of disputes according to the Torah is integral to living in accordance with Halacha. The importance of this cannot be overstated, and the severity of going against this is stated in very harsh terms in Choshen Mishpat (26:1). I often will be conversing with honest, upstanding members of the community who either are not aware of this Halacha at all or think it is merely a stringency.

That is not to say that every conflict must be resolved through Bais Din. As long as litigation is not involved, the parties may resolve the issue by agreement among themselves or with a third party mediator, which is often the case with many claims filed with our Bais Din, as I mentioned earlier.

### Is there anything else you would like to add?

I think it is important for our community to give some thought to how fortunate we are. Not only do we have many Rabbanim who are Halachic authorities and leaders, but we also have much collaboration and Achdus among these Rabbonim. I am hard pressed to think of another community in North America which has that combination in its Rabbinic leadership.

I deal with the local Rabbonim very closely, and can honestly say that I derive inspiration from the level of service they do for the community in sincerity and integrity.

In our efforts to follow these Halachos carefully, we should all merit a favorable judgement by Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

If your Shul or organization would like a Shiur from the Baltimore Bais Din, please contact Rabbi Rosenfeld at RYR@baltimorebaisdin.org



**Wishing the community a happy, healthy & safe New Year!**