

Religion and State in the Past Month

Week of Nov 6:

The Ministerial Committee on Legislation voted against the proposed bill by MKs Ksenia Svetlova and Michal Biran (Zionist Camp) that sought to reimburse the financial expenses spent on conducting civil marriages abroad. Later on in the week, this proposal was rejected in the Knesset plenum as well.

MK Svetlova remarked: "Hundreds of thousands of women and men in Israel whose only sin is that do not identify with its Orthodox character, or they do not "fit" in terms of ideological, religious or sexual orientation, find themselves excluded from the system. This intolerable situation forces them to marry outside of Israel, in places such as Cyprus or Prague, far from their loving family, friends, home and homeland. Even Lebanon is more advanced than us: for more than two years already they now allow civil marriages there. I decided that I could no longer be silent concerning this intolerable situation. This morning I led a demonstration of brides in front of the Knesset, and in the afternoon I went on the stage of the plenum wearing a veil... the rejection of the proposal indicates the extent to which the coalition members, including Yisrael Beiteinu, are out of touch with their voters. They of all parties, who put the separation of religion and state at the heart of their election platform, either abstained or voted against the bill. In doing so, they turned a cold shoulder to the electorate, which is composed, among others, of immigrants that are unrecognized as Jews by the State. We will not give up, and will continue to fight for a sane, free and more pluralistic Israel!"

[Click here and read more about marriage on the JPW website.](#)

The Labor and Welfare Committee approved an agreement funding the transportation of the deceased for civil burial. The agreement is beneficial for two sections of the population – those that seek to be buried in a civil burial according to their beliefs, and those citizens without religion who are unable to be buried in a Jewish burial. The State will now fund the transfer of the deceased to a civil cemetery, if such a cemetery does not exist where the deceased lived or where he died, thereby making their status equal to that of 'ordinary' deceased.

This agreement stands alongside the bill by Merav Michaeli (Zionist Camp) that will be heard this coming week, requesting that families of the deceased be exempted from paying for transportation of the deceased on Saturdays and Holidays, days which are not considered part of the normal business hours of the Hevra Kadisha (the Jewish burial society.)

Week of Nov 13:

As part of the “Aliyah Day” event at the Knesset, MK Meirav Ben Ari (Kulanu) mentioned the relationship with Diaspora Jewry and the various streams of Judaism. She noted that she became aware of pluralistic Judaism when she participated in a delegation of the Jewish agency and JFNA in the United States. [Watch here](#)

Minister Deri spoke about Conservative and Reform Judaism and the Western Wall agreement in the Knesset plenum, as noted above. In another incident in the city of Ashdod, the Minister expressed his happiness following Donald Trump’s election to the US presidency because it will diminish the influence of the liberal Jewish movements . [View here](#)

Week of Nov 20:

This week we were informed that the State Attorney's Office will consider prosecuting recalcitrant husbands that have refused to provide a get (Jewish writ of divorce) despite the fact that the rabbinical courts have obligated them to do so. We have assembled the reactions of the MKs to this decision on the [JPW web site](#) (Hebrew).

In our opinion, this decision is a small step that is part of the struggle on behalf of the women who have been refused divorce and who are unable to remarry, and serves as a reminder of the need to address the root of the problem.

Week of Nov 27:

The political system continued to discuss the "Muezzin Bill" [Targeting the speakers in mosques from which the call to Muslim prayer is broadcast], and it appears that the United Torah Judaism faction lifted its opposition to the law, once the Shabbat siren was excluded from the ban. The Jewish Pluralism Watch collected examples from the Knesset Research Center of how other countries in the world coped from a legal standpoint with the sounds of the muezzin. To view the comparative information (Hebrew) [Click here](#).

