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Outspoken Sephardi rabbi reportedly compares opposing the Chief Rabbi to resisting the Nazis

Rabbi Aharon Bassous launches fresh attack on the religious establishment



Rabbi Aharon Bassous

An outspoken Sephardi rabbi has reportedly made an extraordinary attack on the Chief Rabbi and head of the Sephardi community, comparing his opposition to them to resistance to the Nazis.

Rabbi Aharon Bassous, of the Beth Hamedrash Knesset Yehezkel in Golders Green, is said to have condemned Chief Rabbi Mirvis and Rabbi Joseph Dweck, senior rabbi of the S and P Sephardi Community (SPSC), during a Shabbat address to his community on Saturday.

After Shabbat, a man who said he had heard the address recorded a tape summarising its contents.

According to the tape, Rabbi Bassous - whose synagogue is affiliated to the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations - attacked the London Beth Din following last week's departure of Dayan Yonason Abraham.

Rabbi Bassous also defended allowing the controversial American outreach rabbi, Yosef Mizrachi, to speak at his community this weekend.

Rabbi Mizrachi has been denounced by other rabbis for suggesting conditions such as autism or Downs Syndrome reflected punishment for sins in a previous life and that Ashkenazi Jews suffered in the Holocaust partly because of assimilation.

Rabbi Bassous said he respected Rabbi Mizrachi, although he was not a "chasid" (follower) of his, according to the tape summary.

He said two people who had tried to stop Rabbi Mizrachi from speaking in London were the Chief Rabbi and Rabbi Dweck.

But their opposition was "enough reason" to let Rabbi Mizrachi speak.

According to the tape, Rabbi Bassous had said he "knew people from the Holocaust. And one thing they learned from the Holocaust, is that wherever the Nazis told you to do or tried to make you to do, you knew you had to do the opposite.

"The same thing is here, that wherever people like the Chief Rabbi or Dweck tell you or advise you, you have to try to do the opposite. Because these people are literally from the sitra achra. And that was his advice."

The sitra achra, "the other side", is a kabbalistic term for the realm of evil.

Rabbi Bassous led the attack on Rabbi Dweck two years ago, after Rabbi Dweck gave a lecture on gay love, and has also criticised the Chief Rabbi for not condemning the JW3 centre over LGBT events.

According to the tape, Rabbi Bassous also said that Dayan Abraham had tried to stop him speaking about Rabbi Dweck last year.

Asked about the contents of the tape, Rabbi Bassous declined comment other than to say he had not authorised it being made or circulated.

But Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, president of the Conference of European Rabbis, said, "These unseemly comments are inappropriate. No one will be impressed.

"At such difficult times our community has every right to expect that rabbinical colleagues would come together in support of each other and of the community, rather than play petty politics.

"There is a community suffering and it is the duty of each and every rabbi to offer support."

<https://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/outspoken-sephardi-rabbi-reportedly-compares-opposing-the-chief-rabbi-to-resisting-the-nazis-1.481328>

