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Outspoken rabbi compares opposing Mirvis and Dweck to resisting the Nazis

BY SIMON ROCKER AND BEN WEICH

▶ 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 a plan to allow the controversial American outreach rabbi, Yosef Mizrachi, to speak at his community this weekend.

Rabbi Mizrachi has suggested conditions such as autism reflected punishment for sins in a previous life and that Ashkenazi Jews suffered in the Shoah partly because of assimilation.

Rabbi Mizrachi was due to arrive in the UK on Wednesday but his visit was blocked by the Home Office.

Rabbi Bassous said he respected Rabbi Mizrachi, although he was not a "chasid" (follower) of his. 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, 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* [the 'other side,' a kabbalistic term for the realm of evil]."

Rabbi Bassous declined to comment on the contents of the tape.

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

The Home Office declined to say why it blocked Rabbi Mizrachi's visit.

Rabbi Bassous told the JC: "[The Home Office] cancelled his flight. I'm not sure exactly how, but the message was passed on to him that he would not be allowed to come into the country.

"It's unfortunate what's going on. It was not only me who was involved, but quite a few community groups. We are all disappointed."

A statement, allegedly circulated by a supporter of Rabbi Mizrachi, said: "We apologise to all those who were looking forward to getting *chizuk* (encouragement) from Rabbi Mizrachi."

In response to Rabbi Mizrachi's planned appearance at Rabbi Bassous' shul, the Charity Commission had said it would "engage with the trustees of Beth Hamedrash Knesset Yehezkel... to determine whether this gives rise to regulatory concerns".

