



on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Whom does the Halachah follow? Who is the Mara De-Atra?! I am totally confused!

**Answer:** I am not going to place my head between these giant mountains, lest my skull be crushed. I therefore will not discuss the specific question, but rather the general question of who is the Mara De-Atra of that place.

The Gemara states (Shabbat 130a) that in Rabbi Eliezer ben Hurkenos' region, trees would be chopped down on Shabbat to provide coals needed to make the circumcision knife. This was the custom, even though Rabbi Eliezer ben Hurkenos was the only one who ruled that this was permissible. Similarly, in Rabbi Yossi Ha-Gelili's sphere of influence, people would consume fowl and milk together, because he deemed it permissible. This, is despite the fact that he alone ruled this way, and the general principle that the law follows the majority. Conclusion: we follow the rulings of the local Rabbi, due to the principle of showing honor to Torah scholars, as explained in Shut Ha-Rashba (1:253), as well as Rama (Choshen Mishpat 25:2).

There is a general principle of Halachah: "The Rabbi from Minsk should not interfere in a question for the Rabbi from Pinsk". Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein

related that he once received a letter from the Chinuch Atzma'ei in Eretz Yisrael regarding a dispute between Ha-Rav Yechezkel Abramsky and Ha-Rav Zalman Sorotzkin, and asking for his opinion on the matter. He said that he does not interfere with matters relating to Eretz Yisrael, and the authorities there must answer the question. He said that the Rabbi from Minsk should not interfere in a question for the Rabbi from Pinsk. It is known that Reb Moshe was an expert in Seder Zeraim and even had a manuscript of his commentary on Seder Zeraim in the Yerushalami, but he did not publish it since he did not want to interfere with rulings of Mitzvot relating to Eretz Yisrael (Meged Givot Olam Volume 1, p. 55. Volume 2, pp. 31-32). Similarly, when Ha-Rav Aharon Lichtenstein would be asked questions relating to America, he would say: Ask the Rabbis of America (We heard this in the eulogy of Ha-Rav Mordechai Willig, one of the Roshei Yeshiva of Yeshiva University, for Ha-Rav Lichtenstein).

I, the humble one, therefore cannot rule on this matter, since there is a Mara De-Atra of Yerushalayim, and I do not fill this role.

But the question remains, who is the Mara De-Atra: The Chief Rabbis of Israel or the Chief Rabbis of Yerushalayim? Simply, the Chief Rabbis of Israel are the Mara De-Atra relating to issues of Klal-Yisrael, such as conversion, Kashrut, the Kotel, the Temple Mount, etc. And each local Rabbi is the Mara De-Atra of his locale. Otherwise, the Chief Rabbis could contradict every ruling of the local Rabbis.

In this case, however, there is a dispute between the two Rabbis of Yerushalayim!

This dispute about Purim in Ramot is not a new one. This currently discussion recalls that Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach held that in Ramot, they should celebrate on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Then Ha-Rav Yitzchal Yaakov Weiss, the head of the Edah Ha-Charedit of Yerushalayim, publicized his opinion that they should celebrate on the 14<sup>th</sup> (Shut Minchat Yitzchak 8:62). Ha-Rav Auerbach then humbly refused to state his opinion out of honor for the Mara De-Atra of Yerushalayim. But he once added that according to the Minchat Yitzchak, who ruled that they should celebrate on the 14<sup>th</sup>, Ramot is not part of Yerushalayim, so he could state his opinion, since the Minchat

Yitzchak is not the Mara De-Atra there. But, since Rav Auerbach himself holds that they celebrate on the 15<sup>th</sup>, Ramot is part of Yerushalayim and the Minchat Yitzchak is the Mara De-Atra there, he therefore will refrain from ruling... (Chico Mamtakim Volume 1 pp. 326-327).

As a result, perhaps we can explain that since Rav Amar rules that Ramot celebrates Purim on the 14<sup>th</sup>, it is not Yerushalayim, and he is not the Mara De-Atra there. The Halachah therefore would follow Rav Stern, who rules that Ramot is Yerushalayim (and he is the Mara De-Atra there). But Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach already did not follow this Chiddush.

The Gemara rules in various places that if there is a Chief Rabbi of a city, area or country, all of the other Rabbis must follow his opinion. It is forbidden to rule against his ruling, and it is even forbidden for Rabbis to give rulings, lest the Mara De-Atra rule otherwise. This is true even if the Chief Rabbi's opinion is a singular one (see Shut She'eilat Shlomo Volume 4 pp. 272-276).

In our times, however, the Chief Rabbis of cities do not force their opinion on anyone, and people can do as they wish in their homes and ask which ever Rabbi they choose. Their rulings are only obligatory in matters relating to the

entire city. The same is true with the Chief Rabbis of Israel: their rulings are only obligatory in matters relating to all of Eretz Yisrael. If they are asked questions relating to a city issue, they humbly refuse to answer and refer the questioner to the Rabbi of that city.

Until this day, there is a dispute between the Rabbis about Purim in Ramot and there are different practices among the neighborhood residents. There are some among both the Ashkenazim and Sefardim who celebrate on the 14<sup>th</sup> and some on the 15<sup>th</sup>, and some are strict to celebrate both days.

We therefore say that since there is more than one Mara De-Atra of Yerushalayim and within Ramot itself, each person should follow the major principle "Get yourself a Rabbi" (Pirkei Avot 1:6, 16). And to someone who does not have a Rabbi, we say: Do what you did last year, since there was the same dispute last year and all of the Rabbis still hold the same positions.

