

fixing the title "Rabbi" to their signatures on the marriage license. This led to a great number of "Rabbis", approximately 150, accumulating in the city of Boston alone. The city clerks have always taken it for granted that everyone signing a license is an ordained rabbi, since there has been no occasion of checking up on this affair to determine who has a legal right to perform marriage ceremonies and who has not, and since every officiator signed his name as a Rabbi on the license.

Through an ungentlemanly act of a cantor, the Secretary of State found out that 80% of the marriage officiators are self-appointed rabbis. He promptly sent for a score of officiators and demanded proof that they are ordained rabbis. They appeared before the Secretary of State with an attorney, who declared that he is the "representative" of the United Synagogues of Boston and asked in their behalf that the matter be held in abeyance until the synagogues have had an opportunity to hold a meeting and discuss it. Subsequently, committees representing the Union of Orthodox Rabbis and the English speaking rabbis were invited to confer with a few prominent Jewish citizens, and it was decided that a resolution be sent to the State House that only men who possess certificates from renowned rabbis, or hold diplomas from a Rabbinical Seminary, can be recognized as "Rabbis". The cantors protested vigorously, as this removed them from the field entirely, and they would not be allowed to officiate at marriage ceremonies.

It was decided that a committee of the rabbis meet the cantors. A few conferences were held, and the rabbis declared that they cannot recognize the cantors as rabbis for various reasons. First, it would be a falsehood; furthermore, this would be a direct transgression of the Holy Law, as the cantors themselves admit that many of them are totally ignorant of the marriage laws and are thus responsible for very serious complications that arise later; and then, if a law was passed empowering cantors to perform ceremonies, the following situation would arise: Instead of the 150 so-called "Rabbis" of which the city of Boston boasts now, our community would overnight claim several thousand cantors to its credit. The title "Rabbi," after all is somewhat limited, and it isn't every Tom, Dick and Harry that has the temerity to sign this word in front of his name, but the title "Cantor" can be acquired with such ease that it is simply every man's for the taking. For is there a Jew who cannot claim this title? And we all well know how many of our brethren consider themselves qualified to pray aloud for the congregation and "grab" every opportunity to show their ability. What, then, is the city clerk to do in order to beware of imposters? Can he examine every marriage officiator's voice to determine whether or not the man really is a cantor? And wouldn't the City of Boston have more marriage officiators than weddings as a result? These were some of the reasons why the Rabbis' committee had to ignore the cantors' protests, but in the interests of peace and harmony, it was suggested that the rabbis and cantors work hand in hand, so that no cantor should perform a ceremony unless there is a rabbi present; and the rabbis in turn will officiate only in conjunction with a cantor, who is to be at the wedding. We felt that in that way the spirit of our Holy Torah would prevail and at the same time a peaceful settlement of the controversy would be affected.

The truly religious cantors at once agreed to this suggestion and even today they are willing to cooperate with us in this manner, but some other elements among the cantors, especially those who down deep in their hearts know that they are completely at sea in the realm of marriage laws, have started a campaign against this suggestion in the hopes of securing permission from the State House for a cantor to perform a marriage ceremony just the same as a rabbi.